















# Pantheistic Dilemmas

and

## Other Essays in Philosophy and Religion

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TO STUDENTS  
WHOM I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE  
OF INSTRUCTING  
IN THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
OF BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
THIS VOLUME  
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED



## CONTENTS

ESSAY	PAGE
I. PANTHEISTIC DILEMMAS.....	11
II. A STUDY IN THE PHILOSOPHY STYLED PRAGMATISM.....	37
III. PROMINENT FEATURES IN THE PHILOSO- PHY OF HENRI BERGSON.....	67
IV. THE NOTION OF A CHANGING GOD.....	105
V. ATTEMPTS TO DISPENSE WITH THE SOUL	119
VI. DOCTRINAL VALUES CONTRIBUTED BY THE REFORMATION.....	145
VII. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AS ROMAN CATH- OLIC APOLOGIST.....	187
VIII. THE TRUTH AND THE ERROR OF MYSTI- CISM.....	221
IX. BAHAIISM HISTORICALLY AND CRITICALLY CONSIDERED.....	273
INDEX.....	353





## PREFACE

MOST of the themes considered in this volume are associated with important issues in the intellectual and religious world of to-day. Bahaism may appear to be an exception, but it has a measure of interest as being a most ambitious scheme of religious syncretism which has found adherents and propagators in this country. It affords, moreover, a natural occasion to test the claims of the Mohammedanism from which it originated and to which it accords a certain preference among religious antecedents.

In the composition of the essays the aim has been twofold: on the one hand exposition, and on the other criticism or valuation. The author would express the hope that the former aim has been executed with such fairness that even the reader who is not in full sympathy with the manner in which the second aim is fulfilled in some instances may still find not a little which is suited to command his approval.

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**ESSAY I**  
**PANTHEISTIC DILEMMAS**

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## ESSAY I

### PANTHEISTIC DILEMMAS

IF it be any true interest, any demand of a rational system, to conserve reality both to God and to man, both to the Supreme Spirit and to human souls, then pantheism is justly barred from acceptance. An insuperable dilemma confronts it, in that it must sacrifice God in his proper character if it retains man in his full reality, and must sacrifice man as he is known in consciousness if it will insist upon a God defined as absolutely all-inclusive. In saying this much we do not mean to imply that pantheism must make a decisive choice between just two alternatives. While it is impossible for it to achieve both of the specified ends, it is quite conceivable that by its definitions and reasonings it should at once sacrifice each of them very largely. Within a given system it can blur, mutilate, and in part abolish the proper reality of both God and man. And it is just to this result that it more commonly gravitates.

The fundamental thesis of pantheism is the absolute oneness of being. If this being, over against which there is no second, be called God,

then the pantheistic affirmation is that God is the sole entity, the all-inclusive reality. It follows that what are called finite beings, bodies and souls, either have only an imaginary existence or else are to be rated as literally modes of God, forms into which the sole-existing substance is somehow differentiated. In a crude type of pantheism they might be called parts of God; but pantheistic speculators distinguished by any considerable degree of caution or subtlety generally feel the need of guarding against the notion that God is subject to division or is to be construed as an aggregate. They prefer, therefore, to speak of bodies and souls, so far as they concede to them any reality, as modes or limited expressions of the one absolute Being or of his attributes. This has a certain verbal advantage, though a very serious demand still remains for showing how finite modes are compatible with an infinite subject. The general assumption is that a relation of commensurability must exist between modes and their subject.

A word needs to be added relative to that form of speculation which denies all reality to the universe—viewed as the sphere of the manifold, the individual, and the finite—rating it in its entirety as nothing else than an empty deceiving appearance. Some writers

have been inclined to deny the propriety of including this way of thinking under pantheism, preferring to classify it as a species of monistic idealism. But the exception seems to us destitute of any good basis. No less than those who style finite entities modes of God those who deny the reality of the finite construe God as the sole Being. Their system is most unmistakably a *pan-theism*, only it happens to be of an acosmistic or world-denying type.

In the major elaborations of pantheistic theory some variety of interest has generally obtained. Those who have taken the theme in hand have not consulted exclusively the demands of speculative thinking. Either they have not wished or have not been able to put aside all the ancestral forms of representation. In certain connections they have practiced a species of accommodation, adopting what has been styled the exoteric form of discourse as opposed to the purely philosophic or esoteric form. This remark unquestionably applies to the most distinguished exponent of Oriental pantheism, to Sankara (otherwise Sankarakarya), the great oracle of the orthodox Vedanta philosophy. In the view of some very earnest students it applies also to the most noted representative of Occidental pantheism, Spinoza. In our discussion we pur-

## 16 PANTHEISTIC DILEMMAS

pose to deal in particular with the views of these two writers, believing that in so doing we shall cover the points of principal significance in our theme.

Sankara of India, who is supposed to have written in the ninth Christian century, rivals the most emphatic of pantheistic writers in his endeavor to exclude all limitation and multiplicity from God, or the absolute Being, whom he commonly designates by the name Brahman, but also characterizes as the Self. Of this Being he affirms, "Simple nondifferentiated intelligence constitutes its nature; just as a lump of salt has inside as well as outside one and the same saltish taste, nor any other taste."<sup>1</sup> For it there is no distinction of existence and thought.<sup>2</sup> It cannot be viewed as a substratum for any quality. In fact it is totally without attributes,<sup>3</sup> and totally exclusive of relations, so that it can neither be consistently regarded as a subject for self-consciousness nor operative as a cause.<sup>4</sup> Brahman, it is true, is described by different categories, such as absolute existence, absolute

<sup>1</sup> Commentary on the Vedanta Sutas, in Sacred Books of the East, Oxford edition, vol. xxxviii, p. 157.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> In Sacred Books of the East, vol. xxxiv, p. 327, xxxviii, pp. 202, 203.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol. xxxiv, pp. 330, 357.



knowledge, and absolute blessedness; but, as a modern Vedantist explains, these terms have no qualitative reference; they stand for essence and the three are one intrinsically, though diversified to our point of view.<sup>5</sup> How thoroughly Sankara abolishes all inner distinctions in the Absolute may be judged by this statement from the pen of another expositor: "Brahman may, from a lower standpoint, be conceived as 'with attributes,' but the ultimate truth remains that he is really without attributes. Besides, the conception of the Absolute in the strict sense leaves hardly any room for attributes. Impose any attributes and you at once make the Absolute non-absolute, that is, destroy its very nature by making limited that which is without limits."<sup>6</sup>

In sustaining his contention that the distinctionless Brahman is being in its totality Sankara adopts the bold expedient of denying the real existence of the world. All distinct selves or souls, as well as all bodily forms, are declared to belong to the sphere of Maya or illusion. They are but dreamlike products resulting from nescience. The following state-

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<sup>5</sup>Swami Vivekananda, *The Science and Philosophy of Religion*, p. 82.

<sup>6</sup>Prahu Dutt Shastri, *The Doctrine of Maya in the Philosophy of the Vedanta*, p. 129.

ments will indicate how unequivocally the Vedantist philosopher applied this point of view: "During the subsistence of the world the phenomenon of multifarious distinct existence, based on wrong knowledge, proceeds unimpeded like the vision of a dream, although there is only one highest Self devoid of all distinction." "Scriptural passages declare that for him who sees that everything has its self in Brahman the whole phenomenal world, with its actions, agents, and results, is non-existent." "All the adherents of the Vedanta must admit that the difference of the soul and the highest Self is not real, but is due to the limiting adjuncts, namely, the body and so on, which are the product of name and form as presented by nescience."<sup>7</sup> As is logically dictated by these propositions, Sankara affirms that the individual soul attains to its true goal by passing beyond all sense of individuality and coming to actualize the truth of its identity with Brahman. Thus the false notion of concrete and plural existence will be effectually vanquished. Modern expositors of Vedantism, like Vivekananda and Shastri, differ here in no respect from Sankara.

The above presents in its cardinal features

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<sup>7</sup>In *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxiv, pp. 313, 323, 281, 282.

the real system of the noted Hindu thinker. But, as was indicated, he was constrained in various connections to practice accommodation. Conforming to the style of representation frequently occurring in the ancient oracles of his religion and practically requisite to satisfy the religious needs of the people in general, he sometimes spoke of Brahman as if he were actually the creator of the world and held a real relation to men and things. His fundamental conviction, however, is in no wise ambiguous. The Brahman who fashions and dwells in the world, to whom he sometimes refers as the lower Brahman<sup>8</sup>—otherwise denominated Isvara—is plainly nothing more than a makeshift conception. He is simply a phantom of the religious imagination which fulfills a certain utilitarian function.

Judged by certain lines of statement Spinoza represents a type of pantheism not a little in contrast with that of Sankara. While he agrees with the Hindu thinker in affirming one sole-existing substance, he does not define this as totally void of attributes. On the contrary, he assigns to it an infinity of attributes, though he specifies only two—thought and extension. But, in spite of this fact, he

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., vol. xxxiv, p. 61; vol. xxxviii, pp. 203, 390.

gives place to a series of statements which argue for a distinctionless Absolute very much like that of Sankara. His maxim that "all determination is negation"<sup>9</sup> suggests that the Absolute is not to be qualified by any predicates. Again he makes the explicit declaration that God is a "Being absolutely indeterminate."<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, commenting on terms applied to God by certain writers, he squarely denies that such characteristics as omniscience and wisdom can appropriately be ascribed to him.<sup>11</sup> With equal resoluteness he rules out intellect and will from the eternal essence of God, affirming that what is in God has no more correspondence with these terms as applied to human endowments than the heavenly constellation styled the Dog has with a barking animal.<sup>12</sup> Thus, notwithstanding his formal affirmation of attributes, Spinoza is seen to lean conspicuously toward the theory of an indeterminate or distinctionless Absolute. The posited attributes are brought under suspicion of describing nothing really pertaining to God as the absolute Being.

A second apparent contrast between Spinoza

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<sup>9</sup>Epist. 50.

<sup>10</sup>Epist. 41, otherwise 36.

<sup>11</sup>Short Treatise, cited by E. E. Powell, *Spinoza and Religion*, pp. 202, 203.

<sup>12</sup>Ethics, Part I, prop. 17, scholium. See also Epist. 36.

and Sankara relates to the reality of the world, the aggregate of limited or finite beings. That the former meant in all seriousness to affirm such reality is not to be doubted. Still, it cannot well be denied that he laid down premises which logically blocked the road to the given affirmation. In so far as he postulated an absolutely indeterminate Being he provided no competent basis or background for a manifold world. Such a Being is barren of all power of production, and could not be a subject for any differentiation without contradicting its nature. Furthermore, what he says of God's infinite attributes may be regarded as excluding the possibility of the origination of the finite beings which he characterizes as modes of those attributes—modes of thought and extension; for, he makes this unequivocal affirmation: "All things which follow from the absolute nature of any attribute of God must always exist and be infinite; or, in other words are eternal and infinite through the said attribute."<sup>13</sup> Now, according to Spinoza, there is nothing contingent in the universe. Whatever follows from anything follows by necessity. What place is there, then, for the finite, if the attributes of God can only give rise to the infinite? The philos-

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., Part I, prop. 21.

opher, it is true, predicates an unlimited series of finite things, one thing conditioning another, and so on to infinity. But the addition of one finite thing to another never results in a true infinite. Hence it is only by a *tour de force* that Spinoza can bring in the finite, and he falls little short of confessing the violent shift when he says: "The finite must follow from some attribute of God, in so far as the said attribute is considered in some way modified."<sup>14</sup> The relevant question is, What is to modify the infinite attribute which necessarily operates to produce only the infinite? Surely, not finite things, usurping the field and counteracting the intrinsic demands of the infinite. Nowhere do we find the *modification* relieved of its enigmatic appearance. The phrases "in so far as" and "in some way" rather evade than satisfy the demand for explanation. They are quite unsuitable in a system which professes to leave nothing at loose ends.<sup>15</sup> Thus, though his intention was in a quite different direction, Spinoza provided certain foundations for the doctrine of the illusory character of the world proclaimed by the Vedantist philosophy.

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<sup>14</sup>Ethics, Part I, prop. 28, dem.

<sup>15</sup>Compare Powell, Spinoza and Religion, pp. 130, 141; John Caird, Spinoza, pp. 165, 166.



In criticizing these forms of pantheism we may properly consider their shortcomings, on the one hand, from the standpoint of rational or metaphysical demands, and, on the other, from the viewpoint of religious and ethical requirements.

Sankara's assumption of an indeterminate Absolute may in a way justify his negation of the world, since the perfectly indeterminate affords logically no basis for the production or evolution of anything. But the world is here, and this tremendous fact is not to be disposed of by any easygoing theoretical expedient. The warrant for calling it an empty mirage, a dream, an illusion is in no wise apparent. What test of the illusory can the illusory itself apply? Now, the mind of the individual man is, according to the Vedantist theory, just as much of an illusion as is anything in the world that can be named. When the philosopher, therefore, pronounces the world an illusion, if he speaks as an individual, it is a case of a nonentity pronouncing judgment. Obviously, a judgment of that kind is a mere burlesque, just a section of the whole deceptive phantasm in which the universe consists. On the other hand, if the philosopher assumes not to speak as an individual, what proof can he offer that he has transcended the

character and status of an individual, and is qualified to give forth a message as one who has actually experienced the truth that the distinctionless Brahman alone exists? That would involve both the slipping out of the state of apparent individuality into oneness with the distinctionless Brahman and the slipping back into the state of apparent individuality. The second transition would be required as a logical prerequisite to serving as a witness. The distinctionless Brahman would have neither motive nor ability to serve as a witness to the ghostly unrealities that figure as individual men. So the philosopher must come back into his phantom state, and his message on identity with Brahman becomes a message of a phantom to fellow-phantoms, a message by the very conditions incapable of establishing anything. It can be urged, doubtless, that he might carry back from the experience in which he transcended the sense of individuality an impression of identity with the sole-existing Self. Suppose this, however, to be granted, what basis of rational confidence has been gained? What is the impression of an individual, or of a few individuals, derived through trancelike, or otherwise peculiar, experiences, and sought after with an intensity of zeal involving serious exposure to self-hypno-



tism—what is such an impression worth as compared with the insistent overwhelming impression of men generally as to the real existence of individuals and of the world theater upon which they must of necessity move and act? If the dream hypothesis is to be applied, the ground for applying it to the fancied discovery of identity with Brahman, as against the opposed theory of real individuals and a real world, is as a thousand to one.

Another baffling difficulty confronts the Vedanta pantheism. When asked for an explanation of the illusory world, the vast sphere of deceptive appearances, its advocates fail to give a satisfactory reply. They cannot tell how, over against the indeterminate distinctionless Absolute, the world phantom, with all its lying appearance of individuality and manifoldness, got onto the field. Sometimes they excuse themselves from all obligation to attempt an explanation. Thus the modern Vedantists, whom we have cited, inform us that the law of causality applies only within the sphere of appearances, that it is entirely foreign to the transcendent sphere of absolute being, and therefore it is impertinent to ask for any explanation of the world of deceitful appearances. This may be a very convenient makeshift; but it does not serve to commend

the philosophy in behalf of which it is offered. It justifies the conclusion that in the absolute sphere there is no safeguard against the intrusion of a measureless freak. Either Brahman must be powerless to exclude the phantom world which proclaims a constant lie against the truth of his sole existence, or he must wish that it should be on hand and serve as an instrument of falsehood. In the one case a dualism is affirmed which denies the fundamental assumption of the Vedanta system, and in the other a self-contradiction is imputed to the absolute Being which cancels the idea of his perfection. In short, the Vedanta pantheism encounters rational objections that are plainly insuperable.

Against Spinoza's system it can also be shown that it is far from being invulnerable in a rational or metaphysical point of view. In respect of method it is chargeable with arbitrariness. Easygoing assumption is a distinguishing characteristic. Proceeding from the maxim that a clear idea is self-evidencing, Spinoza starts with the idea of substance as being of this nature, and by a purely deductive process attempts to draw out the whole system of reality. The achievement is a long way from corresponding to the ambitious attempt. From the mere idea of substance there is no

available pathway to the actual. In reaching that goal Spinoza does not travel by the way he assumes to pursue. For example, the attributes thought and extension, which he makes descriptive of reality, are not derived by him from the idea of substance. They are manifestly imported from the empirical realm, the one from the inner domain of consciousness, and the other from the domain of experience through the senses. From the indeterminate Absolute, which, it has been seen, he assumed in at least some connections, he could not and did not get away by a straightforward method.

Remark has already been made on the confusion which attaches to Spinoza's exposition of finite things as respects their essential relations. He derives them from the infinite attributes of God, while yet he affirms that the infinite attributes can properly give origin only to the infinite. A question may also be raised as to whether the definition of finite things as modes or modifications of the divine attributes<sup>16</sup> is altogether agreeable to the requirements of strict philosophical discourse. In the sphere of reality modes hold relation to a subject rather than to the attributes of a subject. If we are to speak of them as modes of an attribute it is only in the sense that they

<sup>16</sup>Ethics, Part I, prop. 25, coroll.

qualify the subject in a particular point of view.

We find Spinoza expressing the judgment that the idea of partition or possible subdivision is foreign to the infinite. It is in no wise made up of parts.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless he records this plain declaration: "The human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God"<sup>18</sup> He also says, "The intellectual love of the mind toward God is part of the infinite love wherewith God loves himself."<sup>19</sup> Thus he crosses his own path in construing the relation of the finite to the infinite.

Another item in Spinoza's system calls for adverse comment. In one connection he repudiates the notion that man necessarily exists as being an absurdity.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, as will be more fully shown further on, he affirms that God acts by the sole necessity of his nature. The inevitable inference is that whatever exists, since nothing can exist apart from God's action, is grounded in absolute necessity. It looks as though Spinoza at this point had inadvertently lapsed into the theistic conception of a free Creator. Each finite thing, it is true, according to the view of

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<sup>17</sup>Ethics, Part I, prop. 13; also prop. 15, scholium.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., Part II, prop. 11, coroll.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., Part V, prop. 36.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., Part II, prop. 10.

Spinoza, is conditioned by its antecedent, and in this respect is contrasted with God. But as no antecedent is in the least degree contingent, a necessity as unqualified as the very being of God must be regarded as running through the whole line of finite things.

That the system of Spinoza has been built up with a good degree of ingenuity and is capable of impressing the reviewer by its architectonic character may be admitted. But judged by any normal philosophical criterion, it affords only a dubious foundation for pantheistic theory. Aside from phases of self-contradiction it moves too exclusively in the region of abstractions to afford any trustworthy ground for conviction respecting the actual.

It remains to apply the religious and ethical tests to the systems which have been considered. That in their premises and logical implications they leave no place for religion, as commonly understood, is perfectly evident. They cancel the relationships which religion in that sense always recognizes. As Professor Bowne has remarked, "Religion demands the mutual otherness of the finite and the infinite in order that the relation of love and obedience may obtain."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Personalism, p. 284.

In any pantheistic scheme the *mutual otherness* of the finite and the infinite is given no place except by an illogical makeshift. Vedantism excludes it by its most fundamental proposition, namely, the affirmation of the proper identity of the so-called individual self with Brahman, or the one true and really existent Self. Following its instructions, the religious man is bound to consider the annihilation of any and every sort of relationship, through identity with the distinctionless Brahman, as the ideal goal. Meanwhile the great task is to purge his mind of the fiction that existence pertains to himself or to anything else as individual. If in the fulfillment of this task he pays any tribute to a higher power, or seeks aid therefrom, he simply associates himself with that which his philosophy pronounces an empty illusion. To call upon Brahman would be sheer nonsense, for Brahman recognizes no object, and, besides, the man himself is as good as Brahman, is in fact, unqualifiedly Brahman, if he would only recognize the truth. As for his sins it is a perfect anomaly to entertain any religious concern for them. They are all in the sphere of Maya, the realm of deceptive appearances.<sup>22</sup> In that sphere, too, if

<sup>22</sup> Vivekananda, *The Science and Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 57, 100, 101, 105.



we may trust a recent exposition of Vedantism by a zealous champion, everything is strictly determined; not a shred of freedom exists.<sup>23</sup> Man attains to freedom only in genuine knowledge of his identity with Brahman, and on the plane of that experience he is quite above the antithesis between virtue and vice.<sup>24</sup> So it would seem that he has no occasion to reckon himself a moral subject at any stage of his career, since in the sphere of Maya he is under compulsion to do exactly as he does, and outside of that sphere he is exempt from all law and obligation.

The fact that religion and morals are found capable of surviving under such a system is not due to the merits of the system, but rather to man's innate religiousness and the persistent demands of his ethical consciousness. Disciples of the Vedanta pantheism cannot escape the working of these potent sources of influence, and are compelled very largely to take religion and morals in that exoteric or accommodated sense which is necessarily repudiated in any strict construction of their philosophy.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 111, 112. We have not noticed that Sankara emphasizes this point, but it is quite certain that Vivekananda designs to figure as an orthodox Vedantist.

<sup>24</sup> Vivekananda, *The Vedanta Philosophy. An Address at Harvard University*, p. 23.

As for the great mass of the people of India, whatever may be their formal position, they practically ignore the characteristic postulates of the Vedanta system.

The system of Spinoza, strictly construed, leaves no place for a sense of fellowship or practical relationship with God. What incentive can there be to approach, or to have any dealing with a God who is declared to possess neither intellect nor will,<sup>25</sup> and who entertains no designs in connection with the universe, final causes being "mere human fragments"?<sup>26</sup> As for love, the philosopher, it is true, speaks in terms of the "intellectual love" of God as exercised toward men.<sup>27</sup> But what kind of a love can he mean to denote? The very phrase *intellectual love* is strangely inappropriate to a Being to whom intellect is denied.<sup>28</sup> Then, too, the God whom he depicts, as has just been observed, is without will. More than that he is void of emotion as understood by us. Pleasure and pain are foreign to him,<sup>29</sup> neither can it be said that he desires aught of any man, or that anything is pleasing

<sup>25</sup>Ethics, Part I, prop. 17, scholium; prop. 32, coroll. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Part I, appendix; Part IV, pref.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., Part V, prop. 36.

<sup>28</sup>Kuno Fischer, *Geschichte der Neueren Philosophie*, vol. i, p. 563.

<sup>29</sup>Ethics, Part V, prop. 17.



or displeasing to him.<sup>30</sup> We submit that it must be a very particular kind of love which is exercised by a will-less, emotionless Being. To all human apprehension it must appear colder than a moonbeam, and might just as well be called by any other name so far as inviting to confidence and fellowship is concerned.

The moral indifference characteristic of God in this system is not the least ground of challenge. Not only is he neither pleased nor displeased with anything, but he is no less the author of evil than of good. He acts by the sole necessity of his nature, having no option as to the manner or order in which he brings things into existence,<sup>31</sup> and leaving no option whatever to any rank of creatures. "Nothing in the universe is contingent, but all things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the divine nature."<sup>32</sup> It follows that what is most vile and criminal in the judgment of men, in so far as it actually occurs, is based in the nature of God; that to ascribe a moral character to him is meaningless; that man at his best is nothing more than a spiritual automaton to whom no responsibility can rationally be imputed.

<sup>30</sup>Epist. 36.

<sup>31</sup>Ethics, Part I, prop. 33.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Part I, prop. 29.

How do pantheists justify the necessitation of moral evil which is involved in their scheme? Let one of their number testify. "From the point of view of pantheism," he says, "all change, evolution, progress, retrogression, sin, pain, or any other good or evil is local, finite, partial, while the infinite coordination of such infinitesimal movements makes one eternal peace."<sup>33</sup> The peace noted in the citation doubtless is to be identified with the peace of the all-inclusive Being, in other words with the peace of God. But is that a worthy conception of God which builds up his peace on the given basis? Does it not, in fact, assimilate his character altogether too much to that of a supreme devil to suppose that the sinking of the *Lusitania* and a thousand other atrocities perpetrated in the recent world war were necessary or contributory to his peace? Plainly, a God who is either indifferent to such evils or has his bliss enhanced by them is not truly a moral being. To invest moral evils with ability to increase the sum of the good and the perfect in the universe is to negate them as evils and to falsify the spontaneous and persistent testimony of man's moral intelligence.

The claim of pantheism to be favorable to

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<sup>33</sup> J. A. Picton, *Pantheism, Its Story and Significance*, pp. 32, 33.

religious sentiment on the ground of its great emphasis on the divine immanence ought not to deceive anyone. Undoubtedly, the conviction that God is near helps to foster that sentiment. But a nearness which passes over into identity, which cancels the sense of personal relationships, which obliterates the *mutual otherness* of the finite and the infinite, must in the long run rather paralyze than vitalize religious feeling. Quite possibly the sentimentalist may find a passing gratification in the thought of a Deity who sleeps in the plant, dreams in the animal, and awakens in man. But well-poised reflective piety cannot rest satisfied with a God who is sunk in slumber, or wanders in the vagaries of dreams, or has no better knowledge of himself than is contained in the fragmentary and contradictory thoughts of men about him. That sort of nearness truly interpreted means nothing better than remoteness and indifference. To secure the most healthful and efficient emphasis on the divine immanence it is only necessary to have recourse to a wisely constructed theism.

The effect of pantheism in negating or radically obscuring the personality of God is an injury to religion for which, so far as we can discover, it offers no real compensation. Its attempt to cover up the injury by speak-

ing of God as the suprapersonal does not mend the matter. Personality, as including self-consciousness and self-determination, is the highest category that can be named. Therefore to deny personality to God is practically to assimilate him to the infrapersonal. From this lowered conception no escape can be made by the use of any such fanciful and arbitrary epithet as "suprapersonal."

ESSAY II

A STUDY IN THE PHILOSOPHY  
STYLED PRAGMATISM



## ESSAY II

### A STUDY IN THE PHILOSOPHY STYLED PRAGMATISM

SOME years ago an American professor remarked that he had discovered thirteen varieties of pragmatism. This makes a rather bewildering list, but it seems not to be exhaustive, since some pragmatists disclaim adherence to any one of the specified varieties.

The responsibility for introducing the term "pragmatism" into the philosophical vocabulary seems to be chargeable to Charles S. Pierce, who in 1878 employed it to designate a method for making our ideas clear. As used by him it stood for a much less radical departure in philosophical theory than it has come to denote in recent years.<sup>1</sup>

Forbearing any attempt to distinguish and to characterize all the types of pragmatism, we purpose to take account mainly of the views of three representatives of the new philosophy, namely, William James, F. C. S. Schiller, and John Dewey, the first named having been connected with Harvard University, the second with Oxford, and the third

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<sup>1</sup>Hibbert Journal, October, 1908, pp. 111, 112.

with the University of Chicago and later with Columbia University. It is our conviction that in the writings of these three men, together with those of their disciples who substantially agree with them, we find about all that is significant in pragmatism as a peculiar and innovating system.

The tenor of thinking on the part of these three representatives cannot be said to be identical. James was less of a stickler for a closed system, exhibited more hospitality for antecedent thought in religious and theological lines, than has been characteristic of Dewey and his school; he was more comprehensive and less consistent. Schiller has expressed, at least in some connections, a larger appreciation of the office of metaphysics than can be credited to either James or Dewey.

Leading champions of pragmatism have been disposed to claim a large degree of originality for their scheme. They concede, however, that some approaches to it were made in former times. Professor James recognizes that contributions were furnished by Socrates, Aristotle, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. "But these forerunners of pragmatism used it in fragments: they were a prelude only. Not until in our time has it generalized itself, become conscious of a universal mission, pretended to



a conquering destiny."<sup>2</sup> Schiller, who prefers the title of *humanism* to that of "pragmatism," finds in particular a forerunner in Protagoras. "Our only hope of understanding knowledge," he says, "our only chance of keeping philosophy alive by nourishing it with the realities of life, lies in going back from Plato to Protagoras, and ceasing to misunderstand the great teacher who discovered the measure of man's universe."<sup>3</sup>

In attempting to define pragmatism we may notice, as a general feature, its pronounced affiliation with evolution theory. It might be said to have come upon the stage as a kind of philosophical annex to Darwinism. The static and the fixed it is strongly inclined to repudiate as alien to reality. The all-inclusive flux of Heraclitus lies much nearer to its way of thinking than the eternal and unchanging ideas affirmed by Plato. Not all the schools, however, are equally dogmatic on this point.

Coming to enumerate the more specific features of pragmatism, we begin with its attitude toward metaphysics. That a strain of disparagement enters into this attitude is quite clearly evidenced by the pronounced hostility

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<sup>2</sup> Pragmatism, p. 50; Longmans, Green & Co., New York.

<sup>3</sup> Studies in Humanism, pref., xiv, xv.

shown to absolutist systems, or the systems which treat the supposition of an Absolute Being as a necessary philosophical postulate and accord to the conception of the Absolute a principal function in construing the universe. Doubtless in their polemic against absolutist systems pragmatists have often had in mind a rather ultra type of speculation, a theory which ascribes such an inclusive role to the universal as to threaten to take away all standing ground from the individual and the particular. However, they make it evident that they are ready to criticize any type of philosophy which takes any considerable account of the conception of the Absolute. "The notion of absolute reality," says Schiller, "is doubly pernicious: (1) as reducing our reality to unreality in comparison to a higher reality, and (2) as making the ideal of reality seem unattainable."<sup>4</sup> Professor James declares that the "radical empiricism which he advocates treats the whole as a collection and the universal as an abstraction,"<sup>5</sup> and that he finds "no reason for even suspecting the existence of any reality of a higher denomination than that distributed and strung along, a flowing sort of reality which we finite beings

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<sup>4</sup>Studies in Humanism, p. 217.

<sup>5</sup>Essays in Radical Empiricism, pp. 41, 42.

swim in.”<sup>6</sup> An opinion quite in accord with this is given by H. H. Bawden in the statement, “The only absolute required is the concrete process of experience itself.”<sup>7</sup> Professor Dewey shows in his repudiation of the ultimate as an object of inquiry how perfectly unreconciled he is to the idea of the Absolute. “Philosophy,” he says, “will have to surrender all pretension to be peculiarly concerned with ultimate reality”; and he scores Bergson for deeming it “necessary to substitute an ultimate and absolute flux for an ultimate and absolute permanence.”<sup>8</sup>

It should be noticed that Schiller, in spite of his repudiation of the idea of the Absolute, admits the legitimacy of making ultimates an object of inquiry, and so lays a basis for a pretty high valuation of metaphysics, the chief concern of which is precisely with ultimates. Quite in contrast with many of his fellow pragmatists he declares in a relatively late product of his pen: “It is futile to bid us confine ourselves to this present world of phenomena, and to assure us that we have no interest to raise the question of God and

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<sup>6</sup> *A Pluralistic Universe*, pp. 212, 213.

<sup>7</sup> *The Principles of Pragmatism*, p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> *Creative Intelligence, Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude*, pp. 53, 54, Henry Holt & Co., New York.

of our future. The routine of practice and the world of phenomena, the sphere of positive science, are not self-supporting, self-sufficing, and self-explaining. They point beyond themselves to a reality which underlies them, back to a past from which they are descended, and forward to a future they foreshadow. . . . Metaphysics must exist as the science of ultimate problems, if not of ultimate solutions."<sup>9</sup>

Instead of applying to a given notion the metaphysical test of compatibility with the other factors which must be recognized in a comprehensive and harmonious system, a system which takes serious account of ultimates, pragmatism emphasizes the test of practical consequences. In case of disputed questions it brings forward, says Professor James, the inquiry, "what difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show some practical difference that must follow from one side or the other being right."<sup>10</sup> From this point of view he asserts that pragmatism is in affinity both

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<sup>9</sup>Riddles of the Sphinx, revised edition, 1910, pp. 12, 149.

<sup>10</sup>Pragmatism, pp. 45, 46.

with utilitarianism and positivism.<sup>11</sup> Schiller and others equally exalt the criterion of practical consequences. It would seem, then, that its advocates are inclined to define pragmatism as rather a method than a precise scheme of philosophical conceptions. This, of course, is not equal to saying that, as a matter of fact, they swing clear of theories or dogmas. The admission of Schiller is worth noting, that "methods may be turned into metaphysics by accepting them as ultimate."<sup>12</sup>

In the second place, we consider the conception which pragmatists take of the thinking or cognitive process and of its relation to reality. This feature has received special emphasis in the school of Dewey. In the view of this school the relation in question is much more than one of correspondence. That such is the fact Professor James has also asserted, but in a way which might not command full assent from his pragmatist brethren. "I maintain," he says, "a given undivided portion of experience, taken in one context of associates, plays the part of a knower, of a state of mind, of consciousness; while in a different context the same undivided bit of experience plays the part of a thing known, of an objective 'content.' In a

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>12</sup>Humanism, p. 19.

word, in one group it figures as a thought, in another group as a thing. And, since it can figure in both groups simultaneously, we have every right to speak of it as subjective and objective both at once."<sup>13</sup> An out-and-out affirmation, like this, of the substantial identity of thought and thing, of the knowing subject and of the object, we have not found to be characteristic of the school of Dewey. Their recurring thesis is, rather, that the thought or cognitive activity of the human subject is continuously a power to modify reality. In accordance with this standpoint, the title of one of their books is given as "Creative Intelligence." Knowing, they maintain, is not an indifferent or colorless operation, but is, rather, fraught with purpose, and is efficient to work transformation in the world. Of this transformation there is both abundant need and distinct opportunity for its effectuation, since the world as it confronts us is at once only partially rational and to a large extent plastic.

The following sentences will serve to illustrate the manner in which Professor Dewey puts these points: "Experience in its vital form is experimental, an effort to change the given; it is characterized by projection, by

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<sup>13</sup> Essays in Radical Empiricism, pp. 9, 10.



reaching forward into the unknown."<sup>14</sup> "Knowledge is always a matter of the use that is made of experienced natural events, a use in which given things are treated as indications of what will be experienced under different conditions."<sup>15</sup> "A world already, in its intrinsic structure, dominated by thought is not a world in which, save by the contradiction of premises, thinking has anything to do."<sup>16</sup> "It is the business of that organic adaptation involved in all knowing to make a certain difference in reality."<sup>17</sup> "The change in the environment made by knowing is not a total and miraculous change. Transformation, readjustment, reconstruction all imply prior existences: existences which have characters and behaviors of their own which must be accepted, consulted, humored, manipulated and made light of, in all kinds of differing ways in the different contexts of different problems."<sup>18</sup>

In exposition of an identical standpoint Professor A. W. Moore has remarked: "Concerning the place and function of thinking in experience (or in the world) the pragmatist became convinced that not only do all will

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<sup>14</sup>Creative Intelligence, p. 7. <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 47. <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>17</sup>Essays in Honor of William James, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

and purpose involve ideas, but that all ideas are volitional and purposive, and therefore ideas cannot be true or false entirely independent of their purposive and volitional character."<sup>19</sup> "If an idea is something more than a mere algebraic symbol, if it is the essence of an idea to so connect one experienced thing, or *quale*, or content, with another, that it may be maintained or eliminated, or in some degree altered, it would seem to follow that the strict difference in the character of ideas would be the difference in efficiency in effecting this kind of connection."<sup>20</sup>

In the school of Dewey the transforming virtue of the thinking, knowing process is conceived to have its culmination in the shaping of human society toward a better ideal. Naturally, as this school negates all reference to any higher entity or more significant unity than society on its earthly theater, it feels called upon to stress the demand for concentrating thought and effort upon the interests of society taken in the specified range. It is inclined to retrench the conception of the separate status of the individual. Even his consciousness is far from being a private matter. At least Professor

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<sup>19</sup>Pragmatism and its Critics, pp. 14, 15, University of Chicago Press.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 85.



Moore so affirms in defining the pragmatist point of view. "However private or individual," he says, "consciousness may be, it is never to be regarded as wholly or mainly the function of an individual mind or soul or of a single organism or brain."<sup>21</sup> Of a form of argumentation which he evidently regards as agreeable to the pragmatist creed, he remarks, "It assumes that my consciousness is a function of a social process in which my body or brain or mind is only one factor. It presupposes that my thinking and feeling may be as truly a function of your brain or mind as of my own. My thinking of sending for you as a physician to treat my headache is as truly a function of your medically trained brain as of my own aching one. And your thinking as you diagnose my case is no less obviously a function of my head than of your own.... Your thinking literally belongs to me."<sup>22</sup>

The third special feature of pragmatism is closely connected with the foregoing and lies in the conception that truth is something progressively shaped or remodeled on the basis of a utilitarian quest. What it amounts to is the expedient under the given conditions. "The true," says Professor James, "to put it

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 275.

very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as the right is only the expedient in the way of our behaving."<sup>23</sup> "The possession of true thoughts means everywhere the possession of invaluable instruments of action."<sup>24</sup> "Truth is *one species of good*, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct from good and coordinate with it. The true is whatever proves to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite assignable reasons."<sup>25</sup> "Truths," contends Schiller, "must be used to become true, and (in the end) to stay true. . . . All meaning depends on purpose."<sup>26</sup> "In all actual knowing the question whether an assertion is true or false is decided uniformly and very simply. It is decided, that is, by its consequences, by its bearing on the interest which prompted to the assertion, by its relation to the purpose which put the question."<sup>27</sup> "All that truth has to do is to be an instrument in man's manipulation of his experience."<sup>28</sup> Truth, as rated by Professor Moore, is the working quality of an idea.<sup>29</sup>

In some of these citations there is a sugges-

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<sup>23</sup>Pragmatism, p. 222.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>26</sup>Humanism, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>28</sup>Riddles of the Sphinx, pp. 133, 134.

<sup>29</sup>Pragmatism and its Critics, p. 86.

tion that truth is not a fixed matter, but rather something made to achieve a purpose, the only limitation being that it should be so made as to fit the existing conditions. Various pragmatist declarations unequivocally enforce this point of view. "Truth," says Professor James, "happens to an idea. It becomes true, is *made* true by events. . . . Truth for us is simply a collective name for verifying processes, just as 'health,' 'wealth,' 'strength,' etc., are names for other processes connected with life, and also pursued because it pays to pursue them. Truth is made just as health, wealth, and strength are made in the course of experience. . . . Truth grafts itself on previous truth, modifying it in the process, just as idiom grafts itself on previous idiom, and law on previous law."<sup>30</sup> "The truths of past ages," observes Schiller, "are at present recognized as errors; those of the present are on their way to be so recognized. . . . If we adopt the humanist view that truth is essentially a valuation, a laudatory label wherewith we decorate the most useful conceptions which we have found up to date in order to control our experience, there is not the slightest reason why the steady flow of the stream of truths that pass away should inspire us with dismay."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Pragmatism, pp. 201, 218, 241. <sup>31</sup>Humanism, pp. 205, 211.

"Truth," claims Bawden, "is itself a growth changing from situation to situation."<sup>32</sup>

Even such select truths as have been rated among the intuitions, or the primal elements and conditions of rational experience in the point of view of pragmatism are not exempt from contingency and uncertainty. Thus Professor James suggests that the common sense categories may have gained their supremacy by a process just like that by which the conceptions due to Democritus, Berkely, or Darwin, achieved their triumph in more recent times; in other words, they may have been discovered by prehistoric geniuses, and then been passed along until, under the power of habit, they became controlling.<sup>33</sup> An equal suggestion of our destitution of any certified basal elements of truth is contained in this curious declaration: "Common sense is *better* for one sphere of life, science for another, philosophical criticism for a third; but whether either be truer absolutely, Heaven only knows."<sup>34</sup> Words not less adapted to negate the idea of ultimate and fixed elements of thought have been penned by Schiller. "We never get back," he says, "to truths so fundamental that they cannot possibly be conceived as having been made. There are no

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<sup>32</sup>The Principles of Pragmatism, p. 204.

<sup>33</sup>Pragmatism, pp. 182, 183.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 190.

*a priori* truths which are indisputable, as is shown by the fact that there is not, and never has been, any agreement as to what they are. All the *a priori* truths, moreover, which are commonly alleged, can be conceived as postulates suggested by a previous situation.”<sup>35</sup>

In the degree in which it discredits the possibility of going back to unassailable foundations, pragmatism naturally is inclined to place the emphasis upon the future outcome. Inquiry, it is urged, should take the forward direction, instead of concerning itself with origins or with ultimates lying back in the past. This aspect of the system is vigorously asserted by Professor James. He names as characteristic of pragmatism “the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, categories, supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts.”<sup>36</sup> It recognizes that it has to deal with an unfinished edition of the universe, and that the best test which can be applied to theories is the reference to prospective results. “Design, free-will, the absolutist mind, spirit instead of matter, have for their sole meaning a better promise as to this world’s outcome.”<sup>37</sup> In a quite similar vein Schiller remarks: “Prag-

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<sup>35</sup>Humanism, p. 197.

<sup>36</sup>Pragmatism, p. 54.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

matism is not a retrospective theory. Its significance does not lie in its explanation of the past so much as in its present attitude toward the future. . . . What it really concerns us to know is how to act with a view to the future."<sup>38</sup> It should not be overlooked, however, that Schiller has elsewhere put no slight emphasis on the necessity and the utility of going back to ultimates.

It remains to consider the attitude of pragmatists toward theology and religion. As respects theology a principal inquiry concerns their bearing toward the theistic postulate.

Professor Dewey's exclusion from the philosophical domain of every thought reaching above or beyond the world flux, the stream of changes recognized by evolutionary science, logically implies agnostic unconcern in relation to the great question of theism; and we have not discovered that he has departed from the demands of logical consistency by any show of practical interest in that question. How emphatically he dismisses what the name of God has commonly stood for in Christian thinking appears in the following statement: "Once admit that the sole verifiable or fruitful object of knowledge is the particular set of changes that generate the object of study,

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<sup>38</sup>Humanism, p. 198.



together with the consequences that then flow from it, and no intelligible question can be asked about what by assumption is outside."<sup>39</sup>

Of Professor James it can truly be said that he was an interested and appreciative student of religion, and was not disposed to thrust theology entirely out of consideration. The genial warmth with which he could address himself to the former theme is sufficiently attested by his book on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. In relation to theological theory he admits that a good case can be made out for the hypothesis of God on the pragmatist basis of judgment by consequences.<sup>40</sup> He so qualifies, however, the force of this admission as to make it impossible to rate him as an advocate of the unequivocal theistic postulate. While he confesses a firm belief in the existence of superhuman powers which work toward ideal ends, and is ready to acknowledge among these a God relatively preeminent, he rejects the supposition of a perfect all-sufficient Deity. "The line of least resistance," he writes, "as it seems to me, both in theology and in philosophy, is to accept, along with the superhuman consciousness, the notion that it is not all-

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<sup>39</sup>The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>40</sup>Pragmatism, p. 300.



embracing; the notion, in other words, that there is a God, but that he is finite, either in power or in knowledge, or in both at once."<sup>41</sup> Evidently, the professor's position is adapted to raise the question whether a polytheistic conception may not claim tolerance. As a matter of fact, we find a Mormon apologist supporting his polytheistic scheme by reference to the pluralistic theory of Professor James.<sup>42</sup>

In the writings of Schiller we find a valuation of the thought of God which vies, in not a few respects, with that of the staunchest theist. He defines him as transcendent nonmaterial Deity, the cause and upholder of the universe. He is also resolute in claiming for men personal immortality as their proper destiny. On the other hand, reacting from the radical absolutist systems in his neighborhood, he pronounces distinctly for the finitude of God, and postulates spirits who share with him the rank of unoriginated being, though having in him their supreme ruler and aim.<sup>43</sup>

As respects the merits of the pragmatism thus far reviewed, we should be quite loath to speak in terms of wholesale disparagement.

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<sup>41</sup>A Pluralistic Universe, p. 311.

<sup>42</sup>B. H. Roberts, *New Witness for God*, I, 468-470.

<sup>43</sup>Riddles of the Sphinx, revised edition, pp. 300ff.

It will not be difficult, however, to mention some points which tend to limit our appreciation of this recent and very confident venture in the domain of philosophy.

In the first place, we are fully persuaded that its opposition to a philosophical use of the idea of the Absolute passes the bounds of discretion. Doubtless it is true that this idea has sometimes been construed in such a way as to become a stumbling-block. One and another speculator interpreting the Absolute, not simply as the primary and independent being who is necessarily rated as the ground of all secondary being, but in strictness as the totality of being and experience, has given us a subject unmanageable and quite useless in any effort to explain the actual. Such misadventures, however, by no means justify a summary dismissal of the idea of the Absolute. If we may trust the testimony of human thinking in the past, that idea has come to stay. The inquisitive human mind cannot be expected perpetually to waive the question as to the ultimate and sufficient ground of the interrelation of things. Coming into contact with the flowing, it must be impelled to ask, "Whence the stream?" Being made aware of the dependent on every hand, it must be incited to ask, "Where and what is

that upon which dependence ultimately falls?" Being met by numberless tokens of a wide-reaching system, it must be rendered inquisitive as to the principle or power which is adequate to unify the great whole and to conserve it in its character as a system. Questions like these cannot be subjected to an effective veto. But, if they are to be answered even partially, an appeal must be made in some form to the idea of the Absolute.

The test of practical consequences which pragmatism insists upon applying to ideas is undoubtedly a worthy and important test. But that fact is no sufficient justification for pitting it against metaphysics to the radical disparagement of the latter. The range of practical consequences is not to be unduly narrowed. The satisfaction of man's intellectual nature is a distinct utility, an end invested with great practical import. A comprehensive view of the universe, which affords a relative rest to his inquiring spirit and is at the same time in harmony with his ethical and religious nature, is not to be tabooed as being a speculative or metaphysical concoction. It is none the less practical because it is metaphysical. Good metaphysics is a highly important aid to good and salutary practice. Not a few of the views, it may be confessed,

which have been put forth in the name of metaphysics, are quite worthy of being consigned to the scrap-heap. And so also are many of the views which have been exploited in the name of science, politics, and sociology. No more in the metaphysical than in other spheres does a list of miscarriages nullify the possibility of normal activity and fruitful achievement.

An all-round view of the conditions of applying the test of practical consequences, it strikes us, would lead pragmatists to be more tolerant of the supposition that the so-called categories are something else than chance products, more ready to admit that they bespeak the truth that man as a rational being has implicit in his mental furnishing certain viewpoints which can and must be applied to the subject-matter of experience. It is difficult to see how a being destitute of this furnishing could be in a position to utilize consequences in the direction of a rational control of life. Consequences cannot be supposed to concatenate themselves into a series of lessons. In order to this result they must be consequences to a subject which is enough of a rational organism to have in itself, implicit in its constitution, somewhat of a standard, some initial means of interpreting and estimating

what comes within the widening range of experience.

It was noticed that pragmatism greatly emphasizes the purposive character of the thinking or cognitive process and magnifies its function in transforming reality. That there is a basis of truth in this order of representation is to be admitted. What needs to be criticized is the disposition to push the representation beyond warrantable limits. The act of knowing may have no conscious purpose at all, knowledge being in many connections unmistakably thrust upon its subject; and, where purpose is an accompaniment it may terminate in the mere satisfaction of knowing. There may be no aim to transform reality and no effect in that direction. So far as we are able to discover, the researches of astronomers carried on since the dawn of civilization have not availed to modify appreciably the stellar universe.

That the perfecting of society should be made by pragmatists the crowning purpose is no cause in itself for adverse comment. We are moved, however, to inquire whether the conception of society as simply a mundane affair—to take the representation largely current among pragmatists—is best calculated to inspire effective interest; and also whether it is

legitimate to go to such lengths as a prominent expositor does in curtailing the individual cast of consciousness and magnifying its social ranges. Surely, a man's own sense of selfhood or personal consciousness is unique. Nothing is more individual. To speak of a community consciousness may be an admissible figure of speech, since in a group of individuals each may have a consciousness similar in various particulars of content to that of the rest. But similarity is not identity. A man cannot speak seriously either of sharing his neighbor's consciousness, or of exchanging heads with him, without giving evidence, not perhaps that he has lost his head, but certainly that for the moment he is allowing it to function rather queerly.

Nothing in pragmatism is suited to incite to more earnest protest than the makeshift character which in multiplied instances it assigns to truth. Such a form of description, we are confident, can never win general acceptance. Truth is not a mere expedient directed to utilitarian ends. Of course in a rational system recognition of truth and obedience to its dictates ought to bring unequivocal benefits. To suppose truth and falsehood to be placed on a parity in respect of ultimate consequences amounts to a glaring impeach-



ment of the rationality of the system. But it is one thing to recognize an intrinsic connection between conformity to truth and beneficial results, and quite another thing to dub certain notions as true simply and solely because they are supposed to subserve beneficial ends. Truth is indeed a *good* in the sense that conformity to it works toward a good. But truth is *truth* as well as a good. There is that in it which is not properly covered by any utilitarian category. Taken comprehensively, it is the whole rational system as it exists in and for the highest intelligence. Taken in detail, it is a congruous part of the rational system. It can be contemplated, and in innumerable instances is contemplated, quite apart from a reference to prospective benefits. In this or that doubtful instance we may, undeniably, be helped to a conviction respecting a truth by a reference to practical consequences; but evidently a way of getting at some truths, or many truths, is not to be construed offhand as determinative or declaratory of the proper nature of truth. By employing a tool I may ascertain that it is adapted to certain uses. The truth of the adaptation, however, is in no wise dependent upon my manipulation of the tool. With all respect to Professor James, it must be pro-



nounced a queer mental feat which confounds truth with a verification process. Verification simply puts a tag of valuation upon the already existing truth. If I suppose that a given amalgam is composed of such and such elements, and by applying the proper tests I approve the supposition, I have gained a vérification of the truth embodied in the amalgam, but the truth or fact existent in the given connection I most certainly have not created. As the very terms imply, truth and the process of verifying truth are two different things.

The pragmatist proposition on the changing nature of truth, if taken in the broadest sense, is obviously self-canceling. If all truths change, then this very proposition, which assumes to state a truth, is itself exposed to change, or, in other words, exposed to cancellation.<sup>44</sup> The pragmatist needs to take note that if he is to be thoroughgoing in abolishing all fixity, he will abolish his own standing-ground. The attempt to reduce truth to a purely relative status or value is bound to end either in open bankruptcy or covert self-contradiction. As Professor Hugo Münsterberg has said: "We may be satisfied with provisional formulations,

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<sup>44</sup>Compare H. H. Horne, *Free Will and Human Responsibility*, p. 159.

but their purpose is, after all, determined by the demand that they approach a truth whose unconditional reality is presupposed. To deny every truth which is more than relative means to deprive every thought, including skeptical thought itself, of its own presuppositions.”<sup>45</sup>

The pragmatist attempt to withdraw consideration from beginnings and to give it an exclusive direction to ends cannot be approved as logical. Very likely, in a practical point of view, ends may deserve larger consideration than beginnings. But the two are not indifferently related, and contemplation of the one as good as necessitates reference to the other. A divine origin of the world is prophetic of an end of the world which is worthy of a divine agent, and an end of the world worthy of a divine agent makes demand for a divine origin. If at the beginning there was only a kind of general mush of things, it may very well be that the end will reveal only a kind of general mush of things. Professor James virtually admits this in his statement relative to the different kinds of outcome promised by a materialistic and a spiritualistic or theistic philosophy respectively. The admission is distinctly out of harmony with philosophical in-

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<sup>45</sup>The Eternal Values, p. 37.

difference toward the retrospective point of view.

Finally, the type of pluralistic conception of the universe which has been advocated by some of the champions of pragmatism does not tend to appreciation of the new philosophy. Of course in some sense room must be made for the many in the system of reality, as well as for the one. On the supposition that finite persons are possessed of genuine freedom an aspect of plurality has a place in the world system. But it is not necessary so to construe the plurality as to banish a staunch conception of unity. If the free persons are made profoundly dependent, in respect of origin, continued subsistence, and capacity for interaction, upon a being who is alone self-subsistent, and whose benevolent will is the sole ground of existence for any other being, we still are left with a satisfying conception of fundamental unity. This is the genuine theistic conception which has prevailed through all the Christian centuries, and it would take more potent persuasives than our pragmatist friends have yet offered to furnish any motive to exchange it for a point of view closely akin to that of antique mythology.

Our conclusion can be expressed in a single sentence. In setting forth the test of practical

consequences pragmatism has afforded a lesson to which heed may fitly be given; but it has construed this test one-sidedly, and has advocated various theories which invite serious criticism.

**ESSAY III**

**PROMINENT FEATURES IN THE PHIL-  
OSOPHY OF HENRI BERGSON**



### ESSAY III

## PROMINENT FEATURES IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HENRI BERGSON

ESTIMATES of the worth of the distinguished Frenchman's adventures in the metaphysical realm are by no means homogeneous. They range all the way from emphatic laudation to emphatic disparagement. A prominent French thinker, Edouard Le Roy, pronounces Bergson's philosophy epoch-making. "It is," he says, "after cool consideration, with full consciousness of the exact value of words, that we are able to pronounce the revolution which it effects equal in importance to that effected by Kant, or even by Socrates."<sup>1</sup> Wilbois and others of Bergson's countrymen, amounting to a considerable group, are also warm admirers of his philosophy. His election to membership in the French Academy testifies likewise that he does not lack appreciation in his own country. In England H. W. Carr, Fellow of the University of London, has devoted a volume to the exposition of the new philosophy, and has recorded the judgment that in respect of method it represents a vast advance over

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<sup>1</sup>A New Philosophy, Henri Bergson, pp. 1, 2.



philosophic procedure for twenty-five hundred years.<sup>2</sup> In America Professor William James, though not altogether a Bergsonian in his thinking, expressed a high appreciation of the brilliant Frenchman, and others in our midst have rendered an equal tribute.

On the other hand adverse criticism has been widespread, and in not a few instances quite emphatic. Fouillée judges that the logical outcome of Bergson's philosophy lies in the direction of skepticism and nihilism.<sup>3</sup> Rageot remarks on its affiliation with a psychological mysticism which ever falls short of verifiable results.<sup>4</sup> Berthelot, member of the Académie Belgique, detects in Bergson's writings elements of artifice and self-contradiction.<sup>5</sup> Professor Antonio Aliotta renders this opinion: "The reaction from intellectualism reaches its zenith in the teaching of Bergson. He opposes exaggeration to exaggeration, impoverishment to impoverishment."<sup>6</sup> An English advocate of science over against the claims of speculation complains that Bergson, as a rule, uses facts

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<sup>2</sup>The Philosophy of Change. A Study of the Fundamental Principles of the Philosophy of Bergson, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>J. McKellar Stewart, A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy, p. 148.

<sup>4</sup>Les Savants et la Philosophie, pp. 178, 179.

<sup>5</sup>Un Romantisme Utilitaire, vol. ii.

<sup>6</sup>The Idealistic Reaction against Science, p. 128.

to confute opposing theories but not to sustain his own, and pronounces his metaphysics a cloud of words carrying with them no real meaning.<sup>7</sup> "The system of M. Bergson," says Santayana, "has neither good sense, nor rigor, nor candor, nor solidity. It is a brilliant attempt to confuse the lessons of experience by refining on its texture, an attempt to make us halt, for the love of primitive illusions, in the path of discipline and reason."<sup>8</sup> Josiah Royce criticizes Bergson for assuming an intuition of reality where it would be more appropriate to speak of an interpretation, and notices his leaning to a mysticism which promises a very equivocal outcome.<sup>9</sup> G. T. Ladd also scores Bergson's resort to the short-cut of mystical intuition, as opposed to a normal dependence on intellectual industry.<sup>10</sup> The conviction is expressed by Professor G. W. Cunningham that some of Bergson's fundamental positions are unsound and that he can be shown to have contradicted himself in relation to his basal conception of legitimate philosophical method.<sup>11</sup> By Roman Catholic

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<sup>7</sup>H. S. R. Elliott, *Modern Science and the Illustrations of Professor Bergson*, pp. 16, 55ff.

<sup>8</sup>*Winds of Doctrine*, p. 107.

<sup>9</sup>*The Problem of Christianity*, II, pp. 285, 307.

<sup>10</sup>*What Can I Know?* pp. 71-73.

<sup>11</sup>*A Study of the Philosophy of Bergson*.

authority a left-handed compliment has been paid to the philosopher in the placing of several of his most prominent works in the Index of Prohibited Writings.

As intelligibility is a prime condition of value in any system of thought, it may be supposed that those who are most fervent in praise of the new philosophy are convinced that at least to them it is not dark or enigmatic. We notice, however, that some who take a friendly attitude toward Bergson acknowledge that his meaning at more than one point is difficult to grasp. "I have to confess," says William James, "that his originality is so profuse that many of his ideas baffle me entirely. I doubt whether anyone understands him all over, so to speak."<sup>12</sup> An expositor who is conspicuously more ambitious to find matter for approval than for censure confirms the impression of James by saying, "I know of no philosopher who professes to understand him completely."<sup>13</sup> Another expositor, whose tone is, on the whole, rather friendly to Bergson, asserts that one would require a new mind to understand his account of the relations between body and mind as contained in his book on *Matter and Memory*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Cited by Hermann, Eucken and Bergson, p. 128.

<sup>13</sup>Dodson, *Bergson and the Modern Spirit*, pp. 23, 24.

<sup>14</sup>E. Hermann, Eucken and Bergson, pp. 140, 141.

The genius of Bergson for illustration has often been commented upon, and it might be supposed that this would serve as a select instrumentality for illuminating his meaning. But in the deeper ranges of thought illustrations are not apt to apply perfectly, and imperfectly fitting illustrations can easily serve to confuse the understanding. We do not discern here any secure means of guidance. On the whole, we should not find it an altogether comfortable task to rebut the charge of rashness in attempting to outline even the salient features of Bergson's thinking.

The relation of Bergson to pragmatism has occasionally been a matter of discussion. Some points of affinity between his thinking and that of leading pragmatists may doubtless be specified. In common with them he makes large account of the idea of evolution. His conception of the utilitarian function of the intellect has also a certain appearance of allying him with a fundamental proposition of pragmatism. Still, Bergson in spirit and ruling conceptions is quite other than a pragmatist. His rating of the intellect does not commit him to a utilitarian philosophy, since he recognizes another instrument, and one much more effective, for getting at truth. In the use of this potent instrument, he is convinced, there

is a possibility of grasping ultimate truths, and not merely of attaining to serviceable points of view. Herein he is at a great remove from the platform of James and Dewey. As a writer who represents the pragmatist school puts the matter, "It is the spirit of the Bergsonian philosophy that the true shall be the opposite of the useful, while for pragmatism the very essence of truth is utility. Utility abolishes insight according to Bergson; according to James, without utility, insight can have no meaning."<sup>15</sup>

In the philosophy of Bergson method holds a place not second to that of content. Central to his method is the function accorded to intuition as the one trustworthy means of grasping the true nature of reality. "It is," he says, "to the very inwardness of life that intuition leads us. . . . By the sympathetic communication which it establishes between us and the rest of the living, by the expansion of our consciousness which it brings about, it introduces us into life's own domain, which is reciprocal interpenetration, endlessly continued creation."<sup>16</sup> As between the two ways of

<sup>15</sup>H. M. Kallen, William James and Henri Bergson, pp. 91, 92. Compare Dodson, Bergson and the Modern Spirit, p. 68; J. Maritain, *La Philosophie Bergsonienne*, p. 69.

<sup>16</sup>*Creative Evolution*, pp. 176-178, Henry Holt & Co., New York.

knowing an object—that of moving around it and that of entering into it—intuition stands for the second. “The first depends on the point of view at which we are placed and on the symbols by which we express ourselves. The second neither depends upon a point of view nor relies on any symbol.”<sup>17</sup> “Intuition, if it could be prolonged beyond a few instants, would not only make the philosopher agree with his own thought, but also all philosophers with each other. Such as it is, fugitive and incomplete, it is in each system what is worth more than the system and survives it.”<sup>18</sup>

Among the formal definitions of intuition propounded in Bergson’s writings the following is perhaps as comprehensive as any: “By intuition is meant a kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible.”<sup>19</sup> As sympathy intuition is associated with instinct. Defining from this point of view, Bergson says: “By intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting on its object and enlarging it indefinitely.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Introduction to *Metaphysics*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup>*Creative Evolution*, p. 238.

<sup>19</sup>Introduction to *Metaphysics*, pp. 7, 8.

<sup>20</sup>*Creative Evolution*, p. 176.



From the foregoing definitions it appears that intuition stands in association with intelligence as well as with instinct. Among statements indicating the character of this association we judge these to be as significant as any. "Though intuition transcends intelligence, it is from intelligence that has come the push that has made it rise to the point it has reached. Without intelligence it would have remained in the form of instinct, riveted to the special object of its practical interest and turned outward by it into movements of locomotion."<sup>21</sup> "Dialectic is necessary to put intuition to the proof, necessary also in order that intuition should break itself up into concepts and so to propagate it to other men."<sup>22</sup>

Sentences like these imply that Bergson regarded intellect, or intelligence, as auxiliary to the functioning of intuition, and so not holding an indifferent relation to philosophy. He has, however, much to say on the shortcomings and incompetency of intelligence in the philosophical domain. By virtue of its nature intellect, he contends, is disqualified for insight into reality. To its static point of view all vital creative processes are foreign. "Reality appears as a ceaseless upspringing of something new, which has no sooner risen to

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<sup>21</sup>Creative Evolution, pp. 177, 178.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 238.



make the present than it has already fallen back into the past; at the exact moment it falls under the glance of intellect whose eyes are ever turned to the rear."<sup>23</sup> "The intellect bears within itself, in the form of natural logic, a latent geometrism that is set free in the measure and proportion that the intellect penetrates into the inner nature of inert matter. . . . Now, when the intellect undertakes the study of life it necessarily treats the living like the inert."<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, "the intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life."<sup>25</sup> "Intuition and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness: intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and thus finds itself naturally in accordance with the movement of matter."<sup>26</sup> "Intelligence is, before anything else, the faculty of relating one point of space to another, one material object to another; it applies to all things, but remains outside of them; and of the deep cause it sees only the effects spread out side by side."<sup>27</sup> Owing to this predilection for the spatial and the solid, it fails of the true vision of time. "We do not *think* real time. But we *live* it, because life transcends intellect."<sup>28</sup> That the

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 47.<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 195.<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 165.<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 267.<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 175.<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

intellect should be specially at home in the realm of matter corresponds with its origin. "Intellectuality and materiality have been constituted in detail, by reciprocal adaptation. Both are derived from a wider and higher form of existence."<sup>29</sup> Its genesis dictates that intellect should be the chosen instrument of physical science, but that it should be relatively incompetent to meet the requirements of philosophy.

The deficit on the side of intellect, as an instrument of philosophy, implies necessarily serious shortcomings on the part of concepts, inasmuch as they are the characteristic products of the intellect. The fact that they are generally given to the expression of advantageous points of view places them aside from philosophy with its scrupulous avoidance of bias.<sup>30</sup> Then, too, "concepts have the disadvantage of being in reality symbols substituted for the objects they symbolize. As symbols they figure only certain general aspects of an object. It is therefore useless to believe that with them we can seize a reality of which they present to us the shadow alone."<sup>31</sup> The change which is so characteristic of reality they can

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<sup>29</sup>Creative Evolution, pp. 186, 187.

<sup>30</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 43.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 17, 18.

only misrepresent. "The various concepts into which a change can be analyzed are so many stable views of the instability of the real." In practice they may be serviceable, but in philosophical construction they are at a discount.<sup>32</sup>

Bergson, however, is not minded to banish concepts outright from the metaphysical realm. "Metaphysics," he says, "must transcend concepts in order to reach intuition. Certainly, concepts are necessary to it, for all the other sciences work as a rule with concepts and metaphysics cannot dispense with the other sciences. But it is only truly itself when it goes beyond the concept, or at least when it frees itself from rigid and ready-made concepts."<sup>33</sup>

As was noticed, Bergson teaches that in order truly to know an object one must enter into it, and that this entrance is effected by intuition. Put in a more emphatic form, this entering into an object becomes an identification with it. That Bergson taught identification of the knower with the known in the cognitive act we find to be assumed by prominent interpreters. Thus J. M'Kellar Stewart, giving expression to the view of the French philosopher, remarks: "Metaphysical knowledge consists in a series of actions in which

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 53, 54.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

we *live* the life of the universe in its various rythms. We are for the instant what we know. . . . In the act of knowing spatial reality the mind is literally spatialized.”<sup>34</sup> In characterizing the same phase of Bergson’s philosophy Santayana writes: “Consciousness is a stuff out of which things are made, and has all the attributes even the most material of its several objects; and there is no possibility of knowing save by becoming what one is trying to know. So perception lies for him where its object does, and is some part of it.”<sup>35</sup>

If we glance at the content of Bergson’s philosophy, we find nothing more characteristic than the proposition that *change* is fundamentally descriptive of reality. With very good warrant it has been named “the philosophy of change,” and its author has been styled “the new Heraclitus.” The following statements of his would seem to justify the title: “Change is far more radical than we are at first inclined to suppose. . . . There is no feeling, no idea, no volition, that is not undergoing change every moment.”<sup>36</sup> “We find that for a conscious being to exist is to change, is to mature, to mature is to go on creating one-

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<sup>34</sup>A Critical Exposition of Bergson’s Philosophy, pp. 27, 90.

<sup>35</sup>Winds of Doctrine, p. 88.

<sup>36</sup>Creative Evolution, p. 1.

self endlessly. . . . What really deserves to provoke wonder is the ever-renewed creation which reality, whole and undivided, accomplishes in advancing, for no complication of the mathematical order with itself, however elaborate we may suppose it, can introduce an atom of novelty into the world."<sup>37</sup> No substratum is reserved from change. "As a matter of fact, this substratum has no reality; it is merely a symbol intended to recall unceasingly to our consciousness the artificial character of the process by which the attention places clean-cut states side by side where actually there is a continuity that unfolds."<sup>38</sup> "Every quality is change. In vain, moreover, shall we seek beneath the change the thing which changes. It is always provisionally, and in order to satisfy our imagination, that we attach the movement to a mobile."<sup>39</sup> "Making a clean sweep of everything that is only an imaginative symbol, the philosopher will see the material world melt back into a simple flux, a continuity of flowing, a becoming."<sup>40</sup> No more radical doctrine of change could well be formulated. Reality in its entirety is made to consist essentially in change or movement. As is declared in comprehensive propo-

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 7, 217.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

sitions of a very appreciative disciple of Bergson: "Reality is movement, an ever-changing activity. . . . Movement is the meaning of change. The something that moves is an illusion engendered by the intellectual apprehension of the movement."<sup>41</sup>

Intimately associated with *change* in Bergson's system, and assigned a like importance, is *duration*. He even rates it as basal to a proper conception of reality. "We perceive," he says, "duration as a stream against which we cannot go. It is the foundation of our being, and, as we feel, the very substance of the world in which we live."<sup>42</sup>

The significance of this term may be indicated by a couple of definitions. "The meaning of duration," says Carr, "is that the past though acted and over is continued into and carried along in the present."<sup>43</sup> "Duration," observes Lindsay, "is a process of change in which none of the parts are external to one another, but interpenetrating, where the past is carried on into the present, where, therefore, there is no repetition, but a continual creation of what is new."<sup>44</sup> As may be judged from

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<sup>41</sup>Carr, *The Philosophy of Change*, pp. 144, 176.

<sup>42</sup>*Creative Evolution*, p. 39.

<sup>43</sup>*The Philosophy of Change*, p. 157.

<sup>44</sup>*The Philosophy of Bergson*, pp. 114, 115.



these statements, the gist of the Bergsonian notion of duration is change plus such an interconnection of changes that the prior subsists in some sense in the subsequent. But the philosopher should be permitted to speak for himself. "If our existence," he says, "were composed of separate states with an impassive ego to unite them, for us there would be no duration. For an ego which does not change does not endure."<sup>45</sup> "The more we study the nature of time, the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new."<sup>46</sup> "Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances."<sup>47</sup> "Without the survival of the past into the present, there would be no duration, but only instantaneity."<sup>48</sup> "The organism which lives is a thing that endures. Its past in its entirety is prolonged into its present and abides there actual and acting."<sup>49</sup> "Our past, as a whole, is made manifest in its impulse; it is felt in the form of tendency, although a small part of it only is known in the form of idea."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Creative Evolution, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>48</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 44, 45.

<sup>49</sup>Creative Evolution, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 5.



Bergson considers it important to discriminate duration from the customary notion of time. In his view, "time, as a concept of the ordinary intelligence and also as a concept of physics, is a mongrel conception born of the unholy union between pure duration and pure space."<sup>51</sup> It is the demand of philosophy that time be kept clear of the spatial aspect, and be construed in its unique character as creative process. "We can analyze a thing, but not a process. Or, if we persist in analyzing it, we unconsciously transform the process into a thing and duration into extensity."<sup>52</sup> No less an interest than the provision of a tenable ground for the assertion of freedom is declared to be dependent upon the maintenance of this point of view. "Every demand," says Bergson, "for explanation in regard to freedom comes back without our suspecting it, to the following question: Can time be adequately represented by space? To which we answer: Yes, if you are dealing with time flown, No, if you speak of time flowing. Now, the free act takes place in time which is flowing and not in time which has already flown."<sup>53</sup> Time flown is an abstract

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<sup>51</sup>Stewart, *A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy*, p. 48.

<sup>52</sup>Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 219, 220. <sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 221.

unreal time dominated by the spatial analogy, and acts ranged along this artificial time take on the appearance of the determined. To view the act as free we must place it in the real time which is identical with the creative process, being, as described by one in close affinity with Bergson, "an indivisible, qualitative and organic becoming, foreign to space and refractory to number."<sup>54</sup>

Bergson's emphasis on the identity of reality with change, or movement to the new, makes him jealous of admitting foresight of future outcomes. The postulate of foresight seems to him to tie up reality to a fixed program and to conflict with the nature of time as a veritable becoming. "If there is nothing unforeseen," he says, "no invention or creation in the universe, time is useless."<sup>55</sup> He will not admit that nature is such that even a supreme mind could foresee its state and content at any future date which might be selected.<sup>56</sup> This unforeseeability, he grants, may be very unpalatable to the intellect, which in pursuance of its practical bent, likes to forecast issues; but philosophy is authorized to correct the intellectual predilection.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Le Roy, *A New Philosophy*, Henri Bergson, p. 189.

<sup>55</sup>*Creative Evolution*, pp. 39, 40.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 37-39.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 29, 30.

On this basis teleology or finality in any thoroughgoing sense cannot be retained. Bergson, indeed, makes a kind of half apology for it, and rates it as preferable to the mechanical theory of the universe. But it cannot be seen that he gives it any real scope. "Life," he says, "in its entirety, regarded as a creative evolution, transcends finality, if we understand by finality the realization of an idea conceived or conceivable in advance."<sup>58</sup> "Life is essentially a current sent through matter drawing from it what it can. There has not, therefore, properly speaking, been any project or plan."<sup>59</sup> "The future appears as expanding the present; it was not, therefore, contained in the present in the form of a represented end."<sup>60</sup> "When once the road has been traveled, we can glance over it, mark its direction, note this in psychological terms, and speak as if there had been pursuit of an end. . . . But this finalistic interpretation has neither value nor significance except retrospectively."<sup>61</sup>

In Bergson's conception of change as basal to reality, of duration as implying the constant carrying over of the past into the present, and of the unforeseeability of the future outcome, we have in the main his doctrine of evolution.

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<sup>58</sup>Creative Evolution., p. 224.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-52.

It is requisite to add only the idea of the original thrust or impulse from which the evolution proceeded and to which it owes its initial direction. Bergson puts this point as follows: We need to predicate "an original *impetus* of life, passing from one generation to another of germs through the developed organisms which bridge the interval between the generations. This impetus, sustained right along the lines of evolution among which it gets divided, is the fundamental cause of variations, at least of those that are regularly passed on, that accumulate and create new species."<sup>62</sup> As very clearly expressing the Bergsonian position we may annex this statement of Le Roy: "Universal evolution, though creative, is not for all that quixotic or anarchist. It forms a sequence. It is a becoming with direction undoubtedly due, not to the attraction of a clearly perceived goal, or to the guidance of an outer law, but to the actual tendency of the original thrust."<sup>63</sup>

In the opinion of Bergson, evolution, though in a sense a victorious progress, is in part a baffled movement. "It must not be forgotten," he says, "that the force which is evolving throughout the organized world is a limited

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<sup>62</sup>Creative Evolution, p. 87.

<sup>63</sup>A New Philosophy, pp. 121, 122.

force, which is always seeking to transcend itself and always remains inadequate to the work it would fain produce. . . . From the top to the bottom of the organized world we do indeed find one great effort; but most often this effort turns short, sometimes paralyzed by contrary forces, sometimes diverted from what it should do by what it does, absorbed by the form it is engaged in taking, hypnotized by it as by a mirror.”<sup>64</sup>

The relation of souls to the evolutionary stream is thus depicted by the philosopher: “Souls are continually being created, which nevertheless in a certain sense preexisted. They are nothing else than the little rills into which the great river of life divides itself, flowing through the body of humanity.”<sup>65</sup>

In the system of Bergson the life which evolves in virtue of the original impulse is regarded as of the psychological order, and might otherwise be called mind or spirit. Whence, then, does matter come? It cannot be said that Bergson makes this clear. He, rather, defines what matter is in contrast with life than tells how it gets on to the field. He describes it as the life movement inverted, taking the backward and descending course

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<sup>64</sup>Creative Evolution, pp. 126, 127.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

rather than the forward and ascending course, merging into necessity rather than into indetermination and liberty. Again he styles it the creative action unmaking itself.<sup>66</sup> These are the characteristic forms of description. But in one connection matter is defined as intermediate between a thing and a representation. "Matter in our view," he says, "is an aggregate of images. And by image we mean a certain existence which is more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing—an existence placed half way between the thing and the representation."<sup>67</sup>

Judged by the whole line of his statements, Bergson may be said to teach a qualified dualism between mind or spirit and matter. This is noted by Le Roy in these terms: "Mind and matter appear not as two *things* opposed to each other, as static terms in fixed antithesis; but, rather, as two inverse directions of movement; and, in certain respects, we must therefore speak not so much of matter or mind as of spiritualization and materialization, the latter resulting automatically from a simple interruption of the former." Le Roy adds, citing from Bergson: "Consciousness or super-

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 245-257.

<sup>67</sup> Matter and Memory, Introduction, pp. vii, viii.



consciousness is the rocket the extinguished remains of which fall into matter.”<sup>68</sup>

The ascending or life movement, as has been noticed, is regarded as creative. Though carrying along in a sense the old, it is incessantly producing the new. Herein lies the essential fact of freedom as construed by Bergson. It means for him indeterminism, the power of reality to transcend antecedents and to add to them a veritably new element. To freedom, as often conceived, as a power of deliberative choice between alternatives, the system of Bergson does not seem to be congenially related. His rejection of teleology leaves no room for affirming freedom in that sense back of the evolutionary stream or series of changes in the universe. That freedom in the same signification—freedom as deliberative choice between alternatives—is not accorded by him to any agent, human or divine, is made evident by this statement: “Free will, in the usual meaning of the term, implies the equal possibility of two contraries, and on my theory we cannot formulate or even conceive in this case the equal possibility of two contraries without falling into a gross error about the nature of time.”<sup>69</sup>

In his published works in philosophy Bergson

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<sup>68</sup> A New Philosophy, p. 109.

<sup>69</sup> Cited by Le Roy, A New Philosophy, pp. 192, 193.



takes very scanty pains to pass judgment on the theistic idea. He deals, rather, with the universe than with God. Judging by the tenor of his thinking, it is natural to conclude that he designs to leave no other place to the thought of God than that of the vital impulse or life movement taken in its universal character. In this view God is rather the principle of change than above change. He is the soul of the ceaseless flux characteristic of reality. To use the words of a Bergsonian writer, "God has nothing of the ready made; he is not perfect in the sense that he is eternally complete, that he endures without changing. He is unceasing life, action, freedom."<sup>70</sup> A formal warrant for this description, it may be added, was supplied by Bergson himself in publishing a sentence of identical import.<sup>71</sup>

It is to be noticed, however, that our philosopher has penned statements which one might take, though scarcely with full confidence, as implying that God is not merely the inner principle of the universal flux, but holds to it a transcendent relation, being the cause of both matter and life. These statements are contained in letters printed in 1912, and run as follows: "The considerations set forth in my

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<sup>70</sup>Carr, *The Philosophy of Change*, pp. 187, 188.

<sup>71</sup>*Creative Evolution*, p. 248.

essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness are intended to bring to light the fact of liberty; those on Matter and Memory touch upon the reality of spirit; those in Creative Evolution present creation as a fact. From all this clearly emerges the idea of a God, creator and free; the generator at once of matter and life, whose creative efforts as regards life are continued through the evolution of species and the constitution of human personalities. There results a refutation of monism and of pantheism in general. But before these conclusions can be set out with greater precision, or considered at greater length, certain problems of quite another kind would have to be attacked—the problems of ethics. I am not sure that I shall ever publish anything on this subject.”<sup>72</sup> A Roman Catholic writer has added the comment, that, while Bergson evidently does not wish to be accounted a believer in pantheism or monism, his premises logically imply these forms of thought.<sup>73</sup>

The foregoing exposition of the distinctive features of Bergson's philosophy may serve as a basis for a judgment on its validity and worth. That it exhibits a large degree of

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<sup>72</sup>Kallen, William James and Henri Bergson, p. 196; also Ruhe and Paul, Henri Bergson, pp. 43, 44.

<sup>73</sup>J. Maritain, *La Philosophie Bergsonienne*, pp. 175ff.

ingenuity and subtlety and contains not a few suggestive points is quite generally admitted. At the same time, competent reviewers find it open to criticism both in respect of method and content. It is our judgment that their strictures are by no means groundless.

Bergson's doctrine of intuition as the select instrument of philosophy, the one valid means of penetrating to the true nature of reality, is far from being proof against objection. His exposition of it can hardly claim the merit of self-consistency. Generally, he construes it as direct vision or mystic insight; yet he defines it in one connection as "instinct which has become self-conscious and capable of reflecting on its object"<sup>74</sup>—a form of statement which certainly includes in intuition something besides direct vision or immediate apprehension. Again, while he contrasts intelligence with intuition, in that the former is directed pre-eminently to practical interests, he nevertheless speaks of intelligence as furnishing to intuition competency to transcend the field of practical interests pertaining to instinct.<sup>75</sup> How a faculty or activity can help another to a result antithetic to its own nature is not clear. This breach of consistency has provoked comment.

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<sup>74</sup>Creative Evolution, p. 176.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., pp. 177, 178; Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 43.

In the view of Professor Cunningham it "arises from a confusion in the author's mind as to the nature and function of intellectual knowledge. He seems to be constantly vacillating between two radically different views of the intellect and its relation to intuition, without any apparent recognition of the fact that he entertains more than one doctrine. One of these views leads him to depreciate the ontological value of intelligence, and to draw a sharp and absolute distinction between intelligence and intuition, between science and philosophy; while the other view impels him to concede some sort of significance to scientific knowledge and to assign to intelligence a function even within the holy of holies of intuition itself. The first view he constantly and explicitly emphasizes; the second he seemingly unconsciously and implicitly holds."<sup>76</sup>

Viewed as to its dominant aspect, Bergson's doctrine of philosophical method is exposed to criticism as overrating the function of intuition. Doubtless in the process of investigation flashes of insight, which outrun the laborious efforts of the intellect, do sometimes occur. But these are purely incidental, cannot be counted on, and cannot be trusted as reliable in advance of some form of verification. The

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<sup>76</sup>A Study in the Philosophy of Bergson, p. 32.

mere possibility of a mental operation akin to divination is insufficient warrant for exalting that kind of operation to the rank of a central factor in philosophical procedure. Of course it may be granted that there are certain elementary truths of which the mind takes cognizance in the way of intuition, and that it is as sure about them at first sight as at any later period. But these are common to rational beings, and necessarily come to recognition, formal or implicit, in rational experience. The intuition which Bergson postulates is no such common property. He puts it in contrast with the data of the ordinary understanding, rating it as a power or activity which penetrates to the interior of reality and directly perceives its nature. It is difficult to realize, quickly vanishes, and makes its contribution to philosophical insight rather than to practical direction. To attach supreme importance to anything so exceptional and fugitive seems to demand a better warrant than has been furnished.

To the point just stated another needs to be added. Suppose the philosophical competency of the Bergsonian intuition to be fully granted. What proof can be given that anyone has ever come into its possession, or made a valid use of it as a philosophical basis? How

can Bergson himself afford any satisfactory guarantee that intuition, in his sense, has had any part in the formation of his own system? In that system certain views on the nature of reality, as consisting in change, motion, creative activity, a process which links past reality with an ever-new content, are strongly emphasized. What pledge has he given that these views were not reached by simple reflection on certain aspects of reality, especially as these are given in self-consciousness, that they were not generated by combining the concepts of change and identity, of continuity and transformation, of necessity and liberty. By working with these concepts and with such others as are readily suggested by the experience of the conscious subject, or by the data of evolutionary science, he might have developed the given views. The suspicion that he proceeded in this way he has absolutely no means of excluding. The peculiar intuition out of which valid philosophy is supposed to be born is not shown to have figured at all. Confessedly, the intuition has to be translated into concepts before it can be expressed, and as the rise of the concepts is perfectly conceivable apart from the intuition, the existence of the latter appears a gratuitous assumption. Nothing but the subjective impression of the philos-



opher vouches for its real occurrence. That this is not a solid basis for a philosophy is quite apparent. It would take an extraordinary consensus of subjective impressions to afford to a metaphysical system a secure foundation.

To criticize Bergson's exaggeration of the philosophical virtue of intuition amounts to a criticism of his disparagement of the function of the intellect or the scope of intelligence. He narrows this beyond warrant in giving it such a predominant association with the spatial domain, the province of physical science. As has been well said: "It is not within the sphere of physical science alone that intelligence has achieved its triumphs. It has, under the guidance of the concepts of purpose, of good, and of beauty, the meaning of which is as clear to it as the concepts of space and of quantity, constructed systems of ethics and art and religion."<sup>77</sup>

The special charge of Bergson that the intellect, on account of its affinity with the discontinuous and immobile, cannot understand life, and is given to misrepresenting it by its concepts, is unjustifiable. Doubtless it is needful to be on guard against giving to concepts an ultra rigidity, in which character they

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<sup>77</sup>Stewart, *A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy*, p. 160.



may afford a one-sided view of reality. But concepts are not intrinsically disqualified for representing the continuity and movement pertaining to the living. In rebuttal of Bergson's charge we cannot do better than to cite the words of Professor Hibben: "The charge is made," he says, "against conceptual thinking that it cannot portray the continuous. On the contrary, it is the peculiar function of thought to represent the continuous. Our perceptual intelligence does things in fragments: our conceptual thought integrates them into a continuous whole. I may not be able to see a process, but I can think it. . . . While conceptual thought possesses the analytical power of separating a given process into elemental parts, into discrete portions of space, or separate instants of time, it must not be overlooked that it functions also in a synthetic capacity, by means of which the connecting lines of continuity are established so that the mind can hold together the elements of one undivided whole."<sup>78</sup>

Bergson's doctrine that change is fundamentally descriptive of reality appears to us to be chargeable with a one-sided assertion of an important truth. In the actual system

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<sup>78</sup>Cited by Wilm, Henri Bergson. *A Study of Radical Evolutionism*, pp. 132, 133.

permanency is welded together with change to a larger extent than the philosopher takes pains to declare. Not only is the past carried over into the present of the individual as a content or tendency, but the individual knows himself as the subject of a long line of experiences reaching back from the present into the past. It is an invincible datum of his consciousness that the experiences belonged to him, that he had them all. Now, unless this characteristic fact of consciousness is to be turned into illusion, there must have been a subject persisting through the entire line of experiences. What is put in evidence is not merely a line of separate acts or impressions, not merely even a series of acts or impressions catching hold of one another in succession in some mysterious fashion, but a series of acts or impressions related in and through a common subject. Bergson's scheme does not do justice to the common subject. Taken in its trend it overstates the aspect of change as compared with that of permanency.

On the subject of duration or time viewed as flowing, some of Bergson's statements are perplexing to the ordinary understanding, not to say quite incomprehensible. The notion of changes so interrelated that the prior subsists in some sense in the subsequent is not

pecially strange. But a question may be raised whether changes so interrelated should not, rather, be characterized as a condition of duration than be identified with duration. An author doubtless is to be granted some liberty in the use of terms, provided he defines them. But to the uninitiated reader it looks like Gnosticising mythology when he finds duration characterized as the foundation of our being, the very substance of the world in which we live,<sup>79</sup> or as the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new.<sup>80</sup> The words of a well-furnished critic seem relevant to the connection: "Real change may be the condition of the development of our consciousness of time, but we have no right to affirm that, therefore, real change is identical with time."<sup>81</sup>

Bergson's denial, or radical qualification, of teleology cannot possibly be acceptable to a genuine theist. His scheme, as Professor Aliotta remarks, "reduces the universe to a perennial stream of forms flowing in no definite direction, a shoreless river whose source and mouth are alike unknown, deriving the strength of its perpetual renewal from some mysterious,

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<sup>79</sup>Creative Evolution, p. 39.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>81</sup>Stewart, A Critical Exposition of Bergson's Philosophy, p. 226.

blind, and unintelligent impulse of nature, akin to the obscure will of Schopenhauer.”<sup>82</sup> To an unpiloted universe of this sort we prefer one planned and directed by supreme wisdom and love.

In ruling out design proper the philosopher affords poor standing ground to his own larger conceptions—creation, freedom, will. “These doubtless are great things,” says Balfour, “but we cannot lastingly admire them unless we know their drift. We cannot, I submit, rest satisfied with what differs so little from the haphazard; joy is no fitting consequent of efforts which are aimless. If values are to be taken into account it is surely better to invoke God with a purpose than superconsciousness with none.”<sup>83</sup>

Remark has not infrequently been made on the enigmatic character which attaches to matter in the system of Bergson. It is defined as the inversion of the life movement. But what turns back or interrupts this movement? Whence comes the inversion? We fail to discover. The facing about is as little explained as the intrusion of the non-ego in the philosophy of Fichte. Matter very likely may

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<sup>82</sup>The Idealistic Reaction against Science, p. 128.

<sup>83</sup>Cited by Gerrard. Bergson. An Exposition and Criticism, pp. 157, 158.

serve life after a fashion in giving it something to battle against. But how can a movement be supposed to initiate the opposite of itself. To use the words of another: "Whence does the original movement derive a direction antagonistic to itself? How can the very contradiction of a force spring from that force? How can descent be produced by ascent? Again we may note a vicious circle in the process. In order that life may ascend it is supposed to require matter to enable it to do so. Its ascent is a march of conquest. Matter is wanted to provide life with problems, the solution of which constitutes creative evolution. But in order that matter may be thus placed at the service of life, life must first ascend and become inverted. The ladder is upstairs. How shall we get it down."<sup>84</sup> An intelligible account of the presence of matter would be gained, if an agent should be postulated beyond both it and the life movement. But Bergson's philosophy as a whole ignores the supposition of such an agent. If he be supposed to entertain the thought of a supreme agent, it is undeniable that he makes no use of it as a philosopher.

Notice has been taken in earlier paragraphs

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<sup>84</sup>Gerrard, Bergson. *An Exposition and Criticism*, pp. 181, 182.

of the double fact that Bergson apparently makes large account of freedom and confesses that he does not employ the term in the ordinary signification. This confession, in our view, amounts to notification of a feature in his interpretation of this theme which must be regarded as greatly limiting the value of his formal commendation of freedom. The supposition that there resides in the life stream a phase of indeterminism, a power of projection into new and essentially undesigned realizations, may be of some interest in the construction of evolutionary theory. But an argument for the ability of a half-blind, or more than half-blind, psychical entity to transcend given antecedents is not a real contribution to the advocacy of personal autonomy. Believing that personal autonomy, a power of deliberative choice between alternatives, is indispensable to a worthy conception of freedom, we can award only a limited appreciation to Bergson's treatment of the subject.

An implicit judgment on our philosopher's attitude toward theism has already been given. Doubtless there is a chance to express himself much more fully on this subject than he has yet done in his writings. It is difficult, however, to see how he could do so in a sense favorable to genuine theism. The denial of a designed



universe involves by itself a rejection of the theistic conception as commonly entertained.

In our estimate of Bergson's system the balance has inclined to the side of adverse criticism. Not a few of his leading propositions fail to commend themselves as valid or well-founded. But this should not be taken as implying that the study of his philosophy is not rewarding. It is adapted to afford a good measure of intellectual stimulus. Moreover it contains valuable points. Bergson argues cogently against the theory of mechanical or physical determination of mental acts. In particular his contention for a psychical basis of memory, as opposed to an exclusive dependence on movements and configurations of brain substance, invites appreciation. His philosophy as a whole may not afford a consistent and reliable offset to materialism; but, if we may judge by actual results among contemporaries, it has a certain adaptation to promote the impression that the materialistic interpretation of reality is untenable.



ESSAY IV

THE NOTION OF A CHANGING GOD



## ESSAY IV

### THE NOTION OF A CHANGING GOD<sup>1</sup>

WHILE sharply contrasted with the trend of catholic theology, this notion has won in our day an appreciable amount of patronage. It has been distinctly advocated by a philosophical writer as prominent as Harald Höffding. In his view there is no substantial warrant for the supposition, so largely current in philosophical as well as theological circles, that fundamental being is above the liability to change. "Kant's dogmatic assumption," he says, "that the thing in itself must be unchangeable was not without influence on Herbert Spencer, for he, after having shown the validity of the concept of evolution within all spheres of experience, does not hesitate to deny that it can be predicated of the unknowable which, according to his teaching, underlies all phenomena. F. C. Sibbern too, elsewhere an ardent evolutionist, assumed that only finite beings, not God, undergo development, or, as he expresses it, God's kingdom develops, but not God himself. But we cannot draw the line

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<sup>1</sup>This essay and the following are reproduced, with modifications, from the *Methodist Review* (New York).

in any such external fashion between the unknowable and the knowable, or between the unchangeable and the changeable. . . . An absolutely unchangeable ground of continuous change is unthinkable. The old difficulty returns as soon as we attempt an objective conclusion. We have at any rate no right to reject the possibility that the inconclusiveness of experience and of knowledge may be bound up with the fact that being itself is not complete but is continually developing.”<sup>2</sup> In another connection Höffding limits the assumption of change in God by reference to a law of development. “It may be,” he remarks, “that divine immutability consists in or expresses itself in the fact that all change takes place according to definite laws, and that the very law of development is itself one of the primary laws of existence; in which case the contradiction between invariability and variability vanishes. The invariable in that case is the law of change itself, and where any particular law undergoes modification this change will always take place in obedience to a higher law.”<sup>3</sup>

An echo or parallel to the statements of Höffding appears in these words of George B. Foster: “We cannot well escape conceiving

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<sup>2</sup>Philosophy of Religion, pp. 67, 68.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

of God as 'becoming' and not 'being.' . . . It belongs to the nature of the Absolute to grow."<sup>4</sup> In terms scarcely less pronounced Professor William James has given expression to the notion that the principle of flux applies to being universally. "I find no good warrant," he says, "for even suspecting the existence of any reality of a higher denomination than that distributed and strung along, a flowing sort of reality which we finite beings swim in."<sup>5</sup> Another representative of pragmatism declares, "We must interpret being in terms of becoming." "Why," he asks, "should we attribute to ultimate reality the static character of completedness when we regard this as indicative of death and decay in our own experience?"<sup>6</sup>

A philosophical writer, who, in present notoriety, outranks most, if not all, of the preceding, remains to be mentioned. Henri Bergson, it is true, has not attempted in his published writings to expound the theme of the divine nature; but he makes change intrinsic to life, fundamental to the conception of reality. Moreover, in at least one instance,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence, p. 177.

<sup>5</sup>A Pluralistic Universe, p. 212.

<sup>6</sup>H. H. Bawden, The Principles of Pragmatism, p. 306.

<sup>7</sup>Creative Evolution, p. 248.

he gives quite unequivocal expression to the conviction that God falls under the category of change, using, as was observed in the foregoing essay, language very nearly identical with these words of a stanch English advocate of his system: "God has nothing of the ready made; he is not perfect in the sense that he is eternally complete, that he endures without changing. He is unceasing life, creation, freedom."<sup>8</sup>

In the passage cited from Höffding the objection to the idea of an immutable God, or unchanging Absolute, takes the form of the proposition that an unchangeable ground of continuous change is unthinkable. So the proposition reads. Yet the philosopher, it strikes us, proceeds to think the very thing declared to be unthinkable. As appears in the second of the passages cited, he supposes back of changes in ultimate being an invariable law directive of all the changes which take place. The unchanging law is viewed as founding unceasing change. In other words, we have a changeless ground of continuous change. Thus the original proposition is negatived. We have only to posit an immutable agent where Höffding posits an immutable law in order to gain the thought of

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<sup>8</sup>H. W. Carr, *The Philosophy of Change*, pp. 187, 188.

an immutable God who energizes in the form of a mutable world. And why should the latter conception be regarded as involving any greater difficulty than the former? In both cases alike there is supposed a changeless ground of change, only in the one case this ground is described by the abstract term "law," and in the other by the personal term "agent." Any one who admits the possibility of a changeless law of change has no good warrant for challenging the supposition of a changeless cause or producer of change. Indeed, it seems quite evident that the two forms of statement may be taken in an essentially identical sense. If, as it certainly may be, law is accounted simply the mode of operation of an agent, then to speak of unchanging law is the same thing as to make mention of an agent unchanging as to will or plan of exercising efficiency.

Bergson's contention that it belongs to the very nature of life to be ever advancing to the new, if valid, would obviously block the way to faith in the divine immutability. But it cannot be seen that the philosopher has given substantial proof that his thesis holds in the absolute sphere as well as in the domain of finitude. His subtle disquisition on the nature of duration or real time as demanding



change—not to say being identical with change—even when taken at its face value involves, of course, no description of the experience of the Absolute so long as it has not been demonstrated that the Absolute is subject to the time category. In any case it would accord ill with metaphysical sobriety to shape the conception of ultimate being by a theory of time in any wise disputable.

What has just been said suggests the proper answer to the objection based on the incompatibility of completedness with the true ideal for man. This objection overlooks the intrinsic distinction between the finite, or conditioned, and the unconditioned, or absolute. Just because man is finite, and cannot possibly escape the scale of finitude, it is appropriate that he should be everlastingly in process. The unconditioned and absolute, as such, need not be supposed to be under any demand to pursue a fleeing goal. A degree of anthropomorphism in formulating our conception of God is doubtless legitimate, but an anthropomorphism that goes on all fours has scanty claims to acceptance.

That the question of God's timelessness is not indifferently related to the assumption of his immutability will generally be conceded. Even a timeless God may take full account

of *before* and *after* in the sense of logical consecution, and must understand what time is for human experience; but plainly there is no occasion to think of him as being carried forward in any sort of evolution such as we contemplate in the sphere of time measures. As above time he is out of reach of temporal change. Temporal change may follow as a resultant of his activity, since that activity may originate beings whose life is partitive and therefore attended by a sense of succession; but the activity itself need not be regarded as subject to temporal change. So have thought many of the world's greatest thinkers. Doubtless to follow out this point of view is likely to afflict our imagination and even to trouble our thinking not a little. The difficulties, however, which pertain to it may be regarded as originating mostly in a rather pertinacious tendency to carry over to the Absolute the mode of our finite consciousness. Thus we are inclined to suppose that a God who has an indivisible grasp of reality, who does not advance from one event or outlook to another, is condemned to a static condition. But we should remind ourselves that if God is really above time, if for him there is no time in which to loiter around and grow weary of a constant program, then there is no expe-

rience in him of the long-drawn-out sameness that our overhasty imagination is given to depicting. We should also remind ourselves that difficulties of no small moment result from an attempt to bring God under the time category. From this point of view there is occasion to ask about the age of God; and if it be answered that he is an infinite number of years old the warrant for the idea of a realized infinite number comes at once into question. Other perplexing inquiries can be propounded, so that the one who reflects upon them seriously might find a motive to be reconciled to the thought of God's timelessness, and to welcome the guarantee which it affords of his superiority to temporal change.

Even apart from appeal to the strict timelessness of God it is possible to hold a stanch doctrine of his immutability. He can be represented as the logical prius of the universe of creatures; as the indispensable ground of the continuance of that universe in being; as knowing all that is truly knowable; as having a will devoted to righteous and benevolent ends in a degree proportionate to his knowledge and power; in other words, as being indefectible in goodness. Against the ascription of such attributes to him it is quite certain that no speculative foreclosure can be urged,

and the ascription is not only agreeable to the demands of piety, but also to the demands of the logic which is not minded to get something out of nothing, or to go in the face of the principle of sufficient cause. One limitation, it must be admitted, would have to be imputed to the God thus defined. As being placed under the time category, he would not be able, so far as we can conceive, to cognize those contingent events which, to use our form of description, are still future. His knowledge, therefore, could not be absolutely inclusive, if any events properly characterized as contingent are actually to take place. But this fact does not necessitate the supposition of any real change in God's feeling, purpose, or plan of administration. In the transcendent scope of his wisdom and power and the measureless depth of his righteous determination he would be able to meet every exigency which might arise without the slightest perturbation or the least wavering in principle. So even apart from the affirmation of strict timelessness the character of essential immutability can be ascribed to God.

Something of an argument might be made out for the stability of God even on the supposition that at the start he was not above the scale of finitude and was confronted by an

already existing world-stuff. If time reaches back in a measureless regress, and God be viewed as contemporary with every section of time, then he must have had an immeasurable period of years in which to try out his scheme, and may well be thought at the present to have brought it to a very respectable pitch of maturity and fixedness. But it is not worth while to attempt to enforce this point of view. The given conception of God—as is also that which makes him simply the blindly working ground of the evolutionary movement—is just about on a level with atheism. It neither solicits to worship nor invites to confidence. A finite entity, which is not supported by a true infinite, may conceivably reach a culmination and thereafter follow the path of deterioration. So practically runs the story of a mythological deity in more than one instance.

Not being under any good speculative requirement to assume that God is in real flux, we find sufficient ground for repudiating that assumption in view of its untoward implications. A God who is worthy of the name must be regarded as fundamental to the entire world order. If he may be supposed to work in an inconstant and self-contradictory manner, the foundations of intellectual confidence are disrupted. One whose God is in process of making

might possibly be brave enough to hope for a good outcome to the system of things; but in a rational point of view he walks on insecure ground. Indeed, the words cited from Höffding invite him to use the postulate of a changing God as a complete basis for incertitude, an explanation of the "inconclusiveness of experience and of knowledge."

Our discussion brings us to this conclusion: There is nothing in the domain of valid speculations which compels us to forego a stanch doctrine of divine immutability. In the absence of such compulsion it would be folly to renounce the doctrine, since we cannot give it up without the sacrifice of great interests of intellect and heart. Our confidence can obtain firm anchorage only in the thought of One who is the *same yesterday, to-day, and forever*.





ESSAY V  
ATTEMPTS TO DISPENSE WITH  
THE SOUL



## ESSAY V

### ATTEMPTS TO DISPENSE WITH THE SOUL

It is far from our purpose to give an inventory of such attempts. A few notable instances will supply adequate occasion to bring out all important considerations which have figured in the attempts or which may be urged in opposition to them. Among recent writers, as it has seemed to us, two in particular, William James and Ernst Mach, can be utilized for a fairly comprehensive unfoldment of our theme.

Professor James was not uniformly and unqualifiedly committed to an exclusion of the soul, the abiding self, or spiritual agent, as distinctive of the individual man. Still, he counted it legitimate and advisable in a foremost treatise to proceed on the basis of that exclusion. In the preface to his *Principles of Psychology* he reprobates the intrusion of metaphysics into the domain of psychology, and makes evident his conviction that the theory of a "spiritual agent" is an alien factor in psychological discussion impertinently transferred from the metaphysical realm. Quite

naturally, what he shuts the door against in psychology he has shown no real ambition to install anywhere else.

As a psychologist Professor James finds no compelling reason for postulating a soul, or spiritual agent. What, then, we are led to inquire, does he put in place of the soul? What in his scheme provides for the continuity and unity of the mental life? Described in brief, the substitute which James brings forward for the soul, or abiding self, is the present thought or pulse of consciousness viewed as appropriating or rejecting the preceding thought or pulse of consciousness, and as effecting acts of discrimination or comparison on the terms thus brought into conjunction. Referring to our consciousness of personal identity, he remarks: "Such consciousness, as a psychologic fact, can be fully described without supposing any other agent than a succession of perishing thoughts, endowed with the functions of appropriation and rejection, and of which some can know and appropriate or reject objects known, appropriated, or rejected by the rest."<sup>1</sup>

Again our psychologist observes: "The passing thought, then, seems to be the thinker; and though there *may* be another nonphenomenal

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<sup>1</sup> Principles of Psychology, I, pp. 341, 342.

thinker behind that, so far we do not seem to need him to express the facts" (I, p. 342). Once more he avers: "The knowledge the present feeling has of the past ones is a real tie between them; so is their resemblance; so is their continuity; so is the one's appropriation of the other; all are realities, realized in the judging thought of every moment, the only place where disconnections could be realized, did they exist. . . . My present thought stands in the plenitude of ownership of the train of my past selves, is owner not only *de facto*, but *de jure*, and all without the supposition of any 'inexplicable tie,' but in a perfectly verifiable and phenomenal way. . . . There need never have been a quarrel between associationalism and its rivals, if the former had admitted the indecomposable unity of every pulse of thought, and the latter had been willing to allow that perishing pulses of thought might recollect and know" (I, pp. 360, 371).

The above statements seem quite definitely opposed to the postulate of a real soul or unitary abiding self. But, on the other hand, Professor James may be regarded as affording directly or indirectly very good standing ground for that postulate. In one connection his words read like a declaration, not merely

of its admissibility, but also to a surprising degree of its probable truth. He says: "The plain fact is that all the arguments for a 'pontifical cell' or an 'arch-monad' are also arguments for that well-known spiritual agent in which scholastic psychology and common sense have always believed.... If there be such entities as souls in the universe, they may possibly be affected by the manifold occurrences that go on in the nervous centers. To the state of the entire brain at a given moment they may respond by inward modifications of their own. These changes of state may be pulses of consciousness cognitive of objects, few or many, simple or complex. The soul would be thus a medium upon which (to use our earlier phraseology) the manifold brain processes *combine their effects*. Not needing to consider it as the 'inner aspect' of any such arch molecule or brain cell, we escape that physiological improbability; and as the pulses of consciousness are unitary and integral affairs from the outset, we escape the absurdity of supposing feelings which exist separately and then 'fuse together' by themselves. The separateness is in the brain-world on this theory and the unity in the soul-world; and the only trouble that remains to haunt us is the metaphysical one of understanding how one

sort of world or existent thing, can affect or influence another at all. This trouble, however, since it exists inside of both worlds and involves neither physical improbability nor logical contradiction, is relatively small. I confess, therefore, that to posit a soul influenced in some mysterious way by the brain states and responding to them by conscious affections of its own, seems to me to be the line of least resistance, so far as we have yet attained" (I, p. 181).

Fairness requires that the limitation contained in the last clause of the citation be not overlooked. In what follows, the Professor sees fit, on the score of economy, to drop the postulate of the soul, and to put in its place that marvelously endowed thought or pulse of consciousness which we have taken pains to describe in his own words. Since, however, the economy or intellectual sobriety of such a procedure may readily be challenged, as will hereafter appear, the paragraph just cited may be rated as a substantial concession to the common theory of the unitary abiding self, or soul.

A second concession to the same theory is rendered by the Professor's acknowledgment that thought appears to us to subsist not by itself, but always in association with a personal



subject, and, indeed, as the function or possession of that subject. "It seems," he observes, "as if the elementary psychic fact were *not thought* or *this thought*, or *that thought*, but *my thought*, every thought being owned . . . . The universal conscious fact is not 'feelings and thoughts exist,' but 'I think,' and 'I feel.' No psychology, at any rate, can question the existence of personal selves. The worst a psychology can do is so to interpret the nature of these selves as to rob them of their worth" (I, p. 226).

This is an acknowledgment of great import. The fact that thought is not isolated, but is ever wrapped up with the consciousness of a relation to a self or owner, makes it impossible to challenge the reality of the self without assailing the trustworthiness or reliability of a constant characteristic of our mental experience.

A third concession is contained implicitly, if not explicitly, in the Professor's declared faith in the possession of free will by man. It is true that he counts psychological investigation incompetent to settle the question of free will. The ground of an affirmative decision he finds rather in the sphere of ethical philosophy than in psychology proper. But, on whatever grounds, his verdict is given in

favor of free will.<sup>2</sup> Possibly in some connections he may have afforded occasion for a suspicion that he puts a limitation upon freedom like that admitted by Bergson, and is rather disposed to contend for spontaneity than for proper alternativity. But, as his words stand, since he indulges in a polemic against fatalism and claims a place for *possibility* as against *necessity*, he figures as an advocate of free will. Now, to accept free will is logically to accentuate the idea of man as a true agent. It is to credit man with a genuine causality; and, since causality is the root idea of substance, it is to rate him as a substantial subject. Professor James, accordingly, in his acceptance of free will, renders a very appreciable tribute to the theory of a substantial soul or personal agent.

At this point the conviction may well insinuate itself that Professor James has not succeeded in keeping to the purely psychological point of view. The sense of personal ownership, which he admits goes with every passing thought, is a capital psychological fact, and carries the conclusion that in the psychological point of view, thought is a function of the self. On the other hand, it is no ascer-

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<sup>2</sup> The Will to Believe and Other Essays, pp. 218, 237, 238, 245; Some Problems of Philosophy, pp. 138-149.

tained psychological fact that the "pulse of thought," or the "succession of perishing thoughts," which is put in place of the self, or ego, performs or can perform all the functions that need to be ascribed to it in order to make out the chosen theory. No one has ever observed the pulse of thought exercising the power of memory,<sup>3</sup> the power of volition, the power to transfer to its successor the sense of continuity or individual persistence. So far as customary speech is a testimony to facts of consciousness it furnishes the reverse of a certificate for the actual exercise of the powers in question by the pulse of thought. No man is prompted to say in description of his experience, "*Thought* remembers, *thought* wills, *thought* in its swift flight gives over to its successor a sense of continuity." Contrariwise every man, learned or unlearned, affirms spontaneously, "*I* remember, *I* will, *I* abide the same person in successive days and years." In short, it is as clear as the sunlight that the Professor's theory is not yielded by plain psychological data. It is unmistakably a metaphysical assumption; and it is a very unlikely piece of metaphysics. If a metaphysical entity is to be brought in, it would seem to be appro-

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<sup>3</sup> On the requisites to an act of memory, see below in comments on Mach's theories.

priate to bring in one which provides for the various functions that must be acknowledged, not one which in the current vocabulary stands for a single function. Nor is this deficit the only trouble with the metaphysical postulate which is adopted. The role which that postulate assigns to the pulse of thought impinges against what looks like a downright impossibility. How can the evanescent thought of the moment get into connection with the antecedent thought in the way of combination or discrimination? When the one has arrived the other has departed, and departed in its entirety, being by supposition an "indecomposable unity." Can, then, the existent effect a real relation with the nonexistent? To the best of our apprehension the units in a succession of flashlights furnish by themselves no intelligible notion of interconnection.

We conclude that the genial and accomplished Professor would have shown superior discretion had he treated the idea of a soul or abiding personal subject not merely as a notion to which a degree of tolerance may be awarded, but as a necessary postulate. We have to deal with a multiform power, a causality that is capable of varied manifestations, a subject that knows itself as persisting through long series of experiences. We are simply

making our theory respond to the demands of the facts when we postulate a soul, a unitary self, that through all changes retains a basis of identity. The installing of this postulate is no result of a careless hypostasizing of some phase of experience. The postulate is demanded for a satisfactory account of experience in its totality.

A theory more resolutely antagonistic than that of Professor James to the conception of a soul or unitary abiding self has been championed by Professor Ernst Mach, of the University of Vienna. In his inventory of reality absolutely nothing comes into view but combinations or complexes of what in one set of connections are termed "elements," and in another set of connections are designated "sensations." To the complexes belong such constituents as colors, tones, temperatures, weights, spaces, and times. These can be rated with equal propriety as belonging either to the physical or to the psychical domains, since there is no strict antithesis between the physical and the psychical. The distinction between the two is only a matter of relation or viewpoint. The same element which, considered in relation to other elements in the environment, belongs to the physical range pertains to the psychical range when viewed

in relation to the sense organs. Mach observes: "A color is a physical object so long as we consider its dependence upon its luminous source, upon other colors, upon heat, upon space, etc. When, however, we regard its dependence upon the retina it becomes a psychological object, a sensation. Not the subject, but the direction of our investigation is different in the two domains."<sup>4</sup>

Again our author remarks: "When I investigate the dependence of A as a given part of the environment upon B as another part of the environment, I am cultivating physics; if I investigate how far A is modified by a change of the sense organ or the central nervous system of a living being, I cultivate psychology" (p. 42). What we have, then, is not two diverse orders of constituents in the world system, but one order. Reality is made up of shifting complexes of elements which we may rate either as sensations or as physical entities, according to the relation in which they are viewed. "The whole inner and the whole outer world are composed of a few elements of like character, now in more transient, now in more stable combination" (pp. 17, 18).

The place which, in such a scheme, must

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<sup>4</sup>Die Analyse der Empfindungen und das Verhältniss des Physischen zum Psychischen, p. 14,



be assigned to the self, or ego, is quite apparent. At most it can be construed only as a relatively stable complex of sensations, just as a solid body is a relatively stable complex of such elements as color, weight, etc. As a practical makeshift the ego may have no little importance. In dealing with bodies and avoiding occasions of pain and damage a man may get along best by visualizing himself as something distinct from his environment. But in strictly scientific contemplation it is necessary to renounce this proceeding. "The opposition between ego and world, sensation or phenomenon and thing, falls then away, and we have to do merely with a combination of elements" (pp. 9, 10).

The apparent simplicity of Professor Mach's scheme might tell in its favor were it characterized by an equal intelligibility and congruity with the facts which need to be recognized. But this is by no means the case. On the contrary, very serious difficulties emerge as one attempts to look into the scheme. In the first place, it is hard to understand the Professor's way of distinguishing sensations from, and at the same time essentially identifying them with, the elements or constituents which make up the world of bodies. These elements surely are revealed only in sensation,



and revealed only in combinations, or as pertaining to bodies; in other words as constituents of the complexes which we name bodies. But, according to the Professor, bodies are but thought symbols (p. 23). So the sense-organs, as falling evidently under the category of bodies, need to be rated as thought symbols. What, then, happens when an element is viewed in relation to a sense-organ? Manifestly, according to the given data, a constituent in a thought symbol is viewed in relation to a particular thought symbol. Now, since an element viewed in relation to a sense-organ is declared to be a sensation, it results that a sensation denotes a constituent (or possibly a plurality of constituents) of a thought symbol viewed in relation to a particular thought symbol. We submit that this is not a specially illuminating definition of sensation. Then, too—and here the major emphasis falls—it seems to contain an implicit contradiction of the author's position, since it implies the need of a subject which, as standing above both element and sense organ, can view them in relation to one another. In the absence of an ego, or true agent, what is to perform this feat? It looks as though the attempt to reduce all reality to shifting complexes of elements which are distinguished

from sensations only by point of view is self-canceling. That which takes the point of view is rationally to be considered as in some true sense above the terms compared and not sunk in the one or the other.

Again, Professor Mach is too easy-going in his attempt to account for such continuity in the experience of the individual as must in all candor be recognized. He deems that on this subject it suffices to speak of relatively stable sensations, which as enduring for considerable periods, give a certain continuity to experience and so provide for the sense of personal identity. Herein the Professor seems to overlook the actual facts about sensations. They change with exceeding swiftness. No one can tell how many transformations may, and commonly do, take place in a single moment. It is only by confounding likeness with identity that one can find license to speak of sensations as continuous for even a very brief interval. The sensation of this day, hour, or moment may be like the sensation of the preceding day, hour, or moment; but this does not make the one identical with the other any more than the ticking of a clock at a given second is identical with the ticking at a preceding second. If there is no other subject than a complex of sensations, then there is

no subject that persists for a single hour, not to say for a single moment. The Professor, therefore, in speaking of what he said or thought thirty years before the time of writing, used language quite unwarranted in the point of view of his own theory. Without the abiding self the sense of continuous personal identity is an unmitigated illusion.

Once more the Professor makes too light a task of explaining memory. Suppose we should grant that his postulates may provide for the possibility that one set of sensations or elements should affect a succeeding set, through the passing over of one or another constituent of the prior set to the following; even then we should be far from any intelligible explanation of memory. In memory, as we know it, there is at once an act of distinction and an act of identification, the recalled experience being distinguished from the present and being identified as an experience of the same subject to whom the present experience pertains. The continuance of some element in experience beyond a given line is not an instance of memory; neither is the occurrence of an experience similar to another an instance of memory. For memory proper there must be the double act of distinction and identification. And what is equal to this task except a true ego,

a unitary personal agent? On the ground that sensations are the whole sum of psychical reality the most distinctive features of memory become utterly enigmatic.

In justifying his exclusion of the ego Professor Mach makes the contention that the analogy of the world may serve to teach us that such a uniting bond is not necessary. "A variously interconnected content of consciousness," he says, "is in no respect more difficult to understand than a diversified interconnection of the world" (pp. 22, 23). In answer it may be affirmed that the unity of personality connotes features, like that of memory or continuous self-identification, which cannot be asserted of any physical unity or assemblage of elements in the external world. Moreover, it is to be noted that the granting of the Professor's contention in no wise dispenses with the demand for an ego. Interconnection in the sphere of the world gets an adequate explanation only by reference to a unitary spiritual Agent who includes all things in his omnipresent energy. By reference to this interconnection, therefore, it is not possible to nullify the demand for making unity in the sphere of consciousness dependent on the subsistence of a unitary personal subject.

One further attempt of Professor Mach to

qualify the need of postulating the ego or unitary self may be noticed. He refers to lapses of self-consciousness, or instances of alienation from the customary sense of personal identity, as properly reducing our emphasis on the unity of the individual. Doubtless some strange disturbances of normal self-consciousness are on record. But what do they prove? Do they demonstrate that such cardinal functions of a rational being as judging, comparing, combining, discriminating, and remembering can be explained apart from the supposition of a unitary persisting subject? Not at all. They do not go a step toward proving that anything less than a unitary subject is capable of these functions. They simply show that some disturbing cause may so interfere with one or another of the functions as to impair or interrupt the sense of personal identity—a result not greatly to be wondered at in consideration of the commonly admitted truth that abnormal bodily conditions may give rise to abnormal mental impressions. Moreover, the very fact that the disturbance of the sense of personal identity is in all scientific verdicts pronounced pathological is on the side of the reality of the persisting self-identical subject. The plain inference is that, if only the disturbing cause were removed, the prior

or customary type of self-consciousness would return. But if true self-knowledge may be recovered, the true self, the abiding personality, must rationally be supposed to be existent. Our judgment, then, is that Professor Mach fails here, as well as elsewhere, to furnish any adequate grounds for rejecting the great catholic belief in the soul or unitary self.

That the attempt of the Vienna Professor to expel the ego should fail to justify itself can be no cause of surprise to the diligent student of philosophical thinking. The attempt of a predecessor whom he acknowledges as a true forerunner, though executed with an ingenuity quite equal to that of any later advocate of the sensational philosophy, was far from being successful. In spite of the extraordinary genius and subtlety which David Hume brought to the task of explaining experience apart from the recognition of the unitary self, he was under compulsion virtually to grant that recognition in more than one connection. A striking instance is contained in the following sentences of the philosopher: "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other—of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a



perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.”<sup>5</sup> Now, even a cursory analysis of this statement reveals how the writer implicitly affirms what he formally denies. The self as stumbling on the perception is present with the perception. The self never, indeed, catching itself without a perception, but always catching itself with a perception—since it is the self which is said to *observe* the perception—is ever on hand with the perception.<sup>6</sup> In truth, the passage in full contradiction of its intent, might be employed to illustrate how unmistakably any experience connotes the self and can be severed therefrom only by an arbitrary process of abstraction.

Hume in search for the self has been compared to the man who, having gone out of his house and looked in at the window, concluded, since he did not see himself in the vacant room, that he was not to be found. Obviously, it was not wise for the man at the window to look for himself apart from the self that was looking. So Hume made a blunder in severing himself from the self that was looking, or in trying to find the self aside from the experiences with which it is indissolubly joined as their owner and through which it is revealed.

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<sup>5</sup>Works, edited by Green, I, p. 534.

<sup>6</sup>Compare Robert Flint, *Agnosticism*, pp. 150, 151.



Other passages in Hume could be used to illustrate faulty procedures in his reasoning. As Andrew Seth (Pringle-Pattison) points out, Hume, in ascribing an uniting function to memory and to imagination, makes the one and the other to serve as a kind of soul or ego.<sup>7</sup> As Thomas Hill Green in his painstaking criticism shows, the Scottish philosopher makes shift to sustain his sensational postulates only by resort to conceptions which transcend those postulates and implicitly contradict them. "The mere occurrence," he says, "of similar feelings is with him already that relation in the way of resemblance which in truth only exists for a subject that can contemplate them as permanent objects. In like manner the succession of feelings, which can only constitute time for a subject that contrasts the succession with its own unity, and which, if ideas were feelings, would exclude the possibility of an idea of time, is yet with him indifferently time and the idea of time, though ideas are feelings and there is no mind but their succession."<sup>8</sup>

It is a fair induction from history that the penalty of self-contradiction, which was paid

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<sup>7</sup>Scottish Philosophy. A Comparison of the Scottish and German Answers to Hume, pp. 62, 63.

<sup>8</sup>Green, Works, I, p. 271.

by Hume in his attempt to negate the unitary abiding self, cannot be escaped altogether by anyone who engages in the like attempt. John Stuart Mill was not able to avoid the penalty, and confessed as much when he admitted that the reduction of the mind to a mere series of feelings issues in the paradox that a series—one term of which is gone when the next arrives—can be aware of itself as past and future.<sup>9</sup> Herbert Spencer had to pay the penalty. He virtually assumed the unitary agent in his effort to explain the genesis of the mental content.<sup>10</sup> In like manner he intruded that agent when, being hard pressed by the task of escaping sheer idealism, he found a guarantee of the existence of objective reality in the fact of our energy being resisted by an energy not our own.<sup>11</sup> Plainly, an energy conscious of being resisted is an energy conscious of activity, a true ego, or self. It is that or it is an illusion. In the latter case it could not, of course, give any trustworthy certification of the subsistence of external reality.

It was noticed that Professor Mach assumes that there is no intrinsic distinction between

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<sup>9</sup>Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, p. 213.

<sup>10</sup>Green, Works, I, p. 438.

<sup>11</sup>Bowne, Metaphysics, pp. 319, 320.

subject and object, that any seeming diversity between them is due to the different points from which they are respectively contemplated; that, in fact, they are complexes of like elements. Professor James, in some of his later essays,<sup>12</sup> was equally outspoken for the thesis that subject and object, thought and thing, are perfectly homogeneous in nature. Now, we are ready to pay all due respect to the humility of the thinker who abnegates all claims to superiority, and rates himself as entirely homogeneous with the chair upon which he sits, with the food which he eats, with the coal which he shovels into his furnace, and with all the other things in the world of things. But the excentricity of the proposition is so arresting that it is very difficult properly to value the humility which it may imply. It is our conviction that it would require a miracle of grace, or some other kind of miracle, to enable a man practically to appropriate this order of self-estimate. The impression as to the uniqueness of personality is deeply imbedded in human consciousness. Man knows the world of things as instrumental to himself. To ask him to rate himself as being right in line with mere things is to ask the practically impossible; and the practically impossible has

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<sup>12</sup> Essays in Radical Empiricism.

very little claim to be regarded as the theoretically valid. Were the supposed feat possible, it would not be likely to endure well the pragmatic test of consequences. The theoretical flattening down of the conception of personality, provided it should penetrate to the habitual feelings, could hardly fail to work prejudicially.

If asked to explain the ego, we should need to reply that it is known through its workings, and is too fundamental to be satisfactorily defined by reference to aught else. Complete description is not to be expected. "As well might one," remarks Professor George H. Palmer, "ask an ultimate analysis of space and time. Descriptions of the functions and peculiarities of all three are possible enough, but neither can be resolved into anything more elementary than itself. Being employed each instant of our lives as conditions of apprehending all else, they cannot themselves be separately apprehended; nor on the same account can they be dispensed with. He who attempts to deny a personal self really implies its existence in the very denial. Experience involves an experiencer. We cannot say that we are aware only of mental states without introducing somebody who is aware and setting up a doctrine of personality the very

opposite of that which is asserted.”<sup>13</sup> This judgment, we are confident, will ever commend itself to common sense. The ultra phenomenalism which construes phenomena as appearances of nothing to nobody is sadly lacking in credibility.

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<sup>13</sup> The Problem of Freedom, pp. 74, 75.

ESSAY VI  
DOCTRINAL VALUES CONTRIBUTED  
BY THE REFORMATION





## ESSAY VI

### DOCTRINAL VALUES CONTRIBUTED BY THE REFORMATION<sup>1</sup>

#### I. RATING OF THE THEME

THE tenor of remarks not infrequently heard in our day might lead one to suppose that doctrines, especially those whose history dates back several centuries, are of too little account to deserve serious consideration. Occasionally, doctrines which the common judgment of mankind has pronounced the most undeniable and indispensable have been treated as worthy of the scrap-heap. Quite recently a writer of some note made a very subtle attempt to convince the public that even the belief in the existence of a personal God and in the fact of the immortal life could appropriately be reckoned among things indifferent and be cast off without regret. When carried to this extreme, disparagement of doctrine stands an excellent chance of being self-defeating. Very few people, capable of sober reflection, can be convinced that it is a matter

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<sup>1</sup> Printed originally in Zion's Herald on the occasion of the four hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation,

of indifference to turn the heavens into a somber, soulless expanse by stripping them of the irradiating presence of an ideal Personality, a Father who plans for his children on the scale of his infinite might and benevolence. Equally small is the percentage of people, sanely awake to their own interests, who can be persuaded that it is a matter of no consequence whether the road which the human race individually and collectively is pursuing, ends with a plunge into the night of an eternal blank, or contrariwise goes on to the bright scenes, the holy fellowships, and the lofty activities of an eternal kingdom. An ultra-radical procedure, like this partly veiled attack upon the foremost articles of the Christian faith, is not the kind of disparagement of doctrine on which we deem it appropriate, in this preliminary article, to invite a judicial verdict.

What we have in mind is the habit, so widely current, to disparage the worth of doctrines by placing them in antithesis to experience and life. The habit in some instances is born of a short-sighted and miscalculating sentimentalism; in other instances it is indicative of scarcely more than a careless omission of conditions which there is no serious intention to deny. However explained, the habit of de-

crying doctrines as compared with experience and life is very much in evidence.

Were the contentions simply that no profession of doctrine can compensate for a bad life and a poverty-stricken experience, or that, in many instances, a good experience and life may be conjoined with doctrines that seem to the observer to be quite defective, no complaint could be made. Indeed, it belongs to normally conceived doctrine emphatically to assert that much. The objection lies against reiterated forms of expression which are suited to convey the impression that doctrines have no bearing on experience and life, at least none that is at all noteworthy.

This impression deserves to be challenged and expelled. Taken in the limited view, doctrines may not be seen to work themselves out into corresponding fruits. But they have an intrinsic tendency in that direction, and in the absence of powerful counteracting influences, they are quite certain, if seriously entertained, to give evidence ere long of their formative influence over experience and life. In face of the world tragedy which has recently confronted us, who can doubt that a stalwart militaristic creed, insistently propagated, can generate, right in the midst of civilization, forms of national self-assertion

which outdistance the atrocities of the most barbarous times? Before the testimony of thoroughly authenticated history, such, for example, as comes to expression in the records of the Spanish Inquisition, who can question that the doctrine of ecclesiastical infallibility, combined with its congenial corollary on the obligatory subserviency of temporal to spiritual authority, can perpetuate for generations a most inhuman and merciless despotism? Turning to an historic illustration of a different character, who will make bold to deny that the transforming efficacy of the message of Jesus was due largely to the superlative doctrines which it contained? That message was shot through with great theological conceptions, conceptions not dictated by simple ethics, but adapted to serve as a vital breath to ethical conviction, and to work potently for the creation of the sweetest charities which can ameliorate the lot or glorify the lives of men. It was practically mighty, because it was theoretically sound, balanced, and deep-reaching, true to the nature of God and to the wants of men. In it we have an imperishable lesson on the function of doctrine, not as being antithetic to life, or indifferently related thereto, but as efficiently ministering to life. Phillips Brooks was giving a faithful republication of that

lesson when he wrote, "No exhortation to a good life that does not put behind it some truth as deep as eternity can seize and hold the conscience."

By all means let it be required of doctrines that they substantiate their claims to hospitality. Let them never be pushed beyond the warrant of accessible data. Let no one dream of forcing them into the sanctuary of the human spirit, or of propagating them by any other means than loving persuasion. But with equal clarity let it be insisted that the element of doctrine be not flippantly disparaged, as if it were antithetic to experience and life, or only indifferently related to them.

In considerations of this order there resides, it strikes us, an ample justification for calling attention to the doctrinal values of the Reformation. The theme is not one which subserves merely an academic interest in the investigator, but has important practical bearings. While the reformers of the sixteenth century cannot be credited with an unblemished doctrinal construction, nor with fidelity at all points to their own better teachings, they energetically commended great doctrinal conceptions which constitute a most valuable inheritance. Furthermore, they founded opportunities for the progressive exposition and clarification of the

Christian faith which must be accounted indispensable for the fulfillment of the true destiny of Christianity in the world.

A call to the vivification of a Protestant consciousness is no summons to sectarian narrowness or animosity. Rather it is a call to put aside a stupid and culpable apathy, and to become properly awake to the demand of conserving and improving a priceless inheritance.

## II. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

The eminently Pauline experience of Martin Luther qualified him, with great energy of conviction, to lay hold upon the Pauline conception of justification. The earnest Pharisee, in the first century, baffled in his attempt to gain assurance of the divine favor by a scrupulous fulfillment of the round of legal observances, broke through bondage and harassment of spirit into freedom and peace by hearty self-committal to God as revealed in the Son of his love. In like manner the monk of Erfurt, in the sixteenth century, abandoning his painful and futile trial of monastic expedients, emerged into the open day of religious fruition by the simple act of casting himself upon the grace of God in Christ. With the reformer and the apostle alike "justification by faith" was no mere speculative inference, but rather reality



approved by the profoundest and most precious type of experience. With both alike it was a watchword of practical emancipation, and not simply a phrase in a dogmatic system.

The faith which justifies, in the view of Luther and his associates, meant very much more than bare intellectual assent. It signified nothing less than heart-affiance with Christ as the bearer of God's gracious economy. Included in it were self-committal, whole-souled trust, *fiducia*, to use the technical term of that day. It denoted an ethico-religious disposition, central to the personality of its subject—a disposition worthy of a divine fostering and ever testifying to the vitalizing agency of the Holy Spirit. But while morally and religiously excellent, and that in a high degree, faith was not allowed by any means to figure as the procuring cause of justification. Its role was adjudged to be that of a graciously established condition. Admitted to be an antecedent perfectly fulfilling the demands of congruity, it was still emphatically debarred from the office of *meriting* the precious treasure conditioned upon its exercise. The justified man, the reformers agreed, can properly give place to no other emotion than an overwhelming sense of gratitude for a freely bestowed benefit.

In the viewpoint of the reformers the faith



which justifies was put in contrast with works. What did that signify? Did it imply that they rated works as an indifferent attachment to the Christian system? Nothing of the sort. It meant that they protested against assigning to works an impertinent function. It meant that they condemned as abortive and injurious the policy of leaning upon the broken reed of imperfect human performances in the midst of the quest for the remission of sin, instead of taking refuge in the sure promise of grace in Jesus Christ. They counted it a gross misadjustment to obtrude any reference to works—which in all likelihood could not bear close inspection—into an audience with the God who is being solicited to pardon offenses and to receive into fellowship. At that critical juncture, they strenuously asserted, the whole glance of the soul should be toward God, centered upon his gracious will revealed in Jesus Christ. Any complacent enumeration of works is absolutely foreign to the situation. Their place is not there, but, rather, in practical demonstration of the fruit-bearing principle which is made to reside in the heart of the justified man. They are to evidence, in concrete form, the power of the forgiven life.

A word of clarification and emphasis is appropriate on this point. Let it be clearly under-

stood that the Protestant reformers had no thought of lightly estimating the importance and value of works rightly placed. No warmer encomium in behalf of good works suitably located, or assigned to a legitimate function, was ever written than that which came from the pen of Luther. Witness this eulogy in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians: "Apart from the cause of justification, no one can commend good works prescribed by God in a sufficiently lofty strain. Who, indeed, can proclaim sufficiently the utility and fruit of one work which a Christian does from faith and in faith? It is more precious than heaven and earth." Again he wrote: "My God, without merit on my part, has given to me all the riches of justification and salvation in Christ. . . . I will, therefore, give myself, as a sort of Christ to my neighbor, as Christ has given himself to me, and will do nothing in this life, except what I see will be needful, advantageous, and wholesome to my neighbor, since by faith I abound in all good things in Christ." Once more he remarked: "Faith is a living, busy, active, powerful thing. Neither does it ask whether good works are to be done, but before one asks it has done them, and is doing them always." So far, indeed, was the teaching of Luther from depreciating good works that it

marked somewhat of an era in their commendation. Of distinct value was the stress which he placed upon the importance of a faithful fulfillment of common duties in deference to God's will, upon the divinely approved forms of social service. He made these immensely superior to the artificial expedients by which ascetic piety seeks to amass merits. "It very often happens," he said, "that the common work of a servant or a handmaiden is more acceptable to God than all the fastings and works of a monk or a priest, when they are done without faith."

Safeguarded in this way against displacing works from their legitimate office, the doctrine of justification by faith must be pronounced in the fullest sense both Christian and rational. Christianity is preeminently a religion of sonship. The perfect filial consciousness of Jesus was the radiant center of his radiant personality. The disciples of Jesus fulfill the ideal set before them only as they share in his filial spirit. Now, legalism is distinctly adverse to the implantation and growth of this spirit. One who depends on the merit of works in approaching God, or who endeavors to put God under obligation by a certain quantum of performances, is playing the role of a servant, and the further he carries the attempt the less becomes the

opportunity for the instatement of the filial consciousness. Any sense of personal relationship with God which can be gained by that method must be faint and unsatisfying as compared with the vital union which faith by its very nature, as trustful, whole-hearted self-committal, effectuates. If the thesis is to stand that Christianity is preeminently the religion of sonship and that this type of religion takes precedence of every other, then the inevitable conclusion is that the doctrine of justification by faith must be emphasized in any normal interpretation of Christianity, and also be rated as eminently conformable to a philosophic view of religion. The sons of the Reformation have the scantiest occasion to offer any apology for this article of their faith. As has been appropriately said: "It is the charter of Christian liberty for all time; of emancipation from legalism with its treadmill service and fear and gloom and uncertainty."

In issuing the emancipating sentence on justification by faith the reformers of the sixteenth century responded to a most urgent demand. They were confronted by an overgrown legalistic system which tended at once greatly to burden religion with mechanical performances and to run it into the shallows. Nor were these obnoxious features simply super-

ficial or abusive attachments to the system held and authorized by the dominant authorities of the church. The sequel proved that they were deeply ingrained characteristics. For a brief illustration, take the single topic of indulgences. In deference to the impression made by the powerful protest of the reformers some restraint was put upon the traffic in these religious goods. The Council of Trent abolished the professional hawkers of the wares. But were indulgences disowned in principle? Far from it; on the contrary, they were formally approved by the Council of Trent as being most salutary to the people, and in the practice of the Roman Church they were continued on a large scale. Even the privilege of acquiring them for money has been conceded, at least in certain areas, down to a very recent date—not to say to the present—as has been evidenced by the recurring grant of the so-called *cruzada* in Spain.

Now, observe what a traffic of this kind implies. According to the well-established teaching of the Roman Church, the temporal penalty for sin, to which the indulgence applies, is due to divine justice. To permit, then, that penalty to be canceled in whole or in part by a money payment amounts to commercializing the justice of God. A grosser substitute for a genuine

spiritual amend could hardly be imagined. Other expedients more largely licensed in recent times for gaining indulgences are only less exposed to criticism. To make the repetition of prayer formulas for a specified number of times, or the execution of kindred exercises, to cover definite portions of the temporal penalty tends to belittle religion by dragging it down to the plane of a picayunish work-righteousness. As opposed to this paltry scheme how worthy appears the teaching of Luther that the Christian ought to bear patiently such retributions as, in the providential order, sometimes follow even forgiven sins, repressing all complaints on account of them in the joy of assured fellowship with the forgiving Lord!

We conclude that in republishing the doctrine of justification by faith the Reformation leaders wrought for the modern religious world a most beneficent work. The more thoroughly we ponder the subject, the more gratefully shall we be inclined to recall this part of their historic achievement.

### III. ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

“The cardinal principle of the Reformation was the revival in men of the sense of personal relation to God, as the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega of their religious life.”



So remarks Henry Wace, and with very good warrant. Indeed, the doctrine of justification by faith, as enforced by the reformers, amounted to a summons to the individual to enter into direct, living, personal relation with the God who has sent forth the promise of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Genuine faith, they conceived, achieves what no anxious attempt to accumulate merits can possibly achieve; it brings the response of God into the heart and effects a sense of reconciliation with him. Thus the doctrine of personal assurance of salvation followed as a corollary from that of justification by faith.

The Reformation leaders used no halting language upon this theme. Luther and Calvin were very explicit and emphatic in their affirmation of the common privilege of Christians to know the comfort and power of assured acceptance with God as subjects of his saving grace. In fact, it may be granted that in the fervency of a freshly kindled zeal they gave expression to a somewhat extreme form of this item in their creed. They were inclined to affirm that assurance is of the essence of justifying faith, so as to be necessarily resident in the justified person. Herein they took inadequate account of the exposure even of the sincere and earnest believer to various causes of disturbance in the sphere of his emotional life. In a better



guarded statement they would have claimed that assurance is a *normal* rather than a strictly *necessary* characteristic of the inner life of one who has entered into a filial standing by the exercise of a vital faith. The needful amendment found place in the Westminster Confession, and later was repeated in the personal conviction and teaching of John Wesley. Great credit, however, is due to the reformers for heralding anew the essential Scriptural message relative to assurance. To ignore or to discount that message involves nothing less than a deistic lapse from the conception of the divine immanence and responsiveness which pervades the New Testament writings.

Referring to the compromising and frigid pronouncements which had obtained in the Papal Church on the subject of assurance, Luther launched out into this vehement strain: "The pope by this infamous dogma, by which he has commanded men to doubt respecting the favor of God toward themselves, has banished God and all the promises from the church, overthrown the benefits of Christ, and abolished the entire gospel." The criticism might have been expressed in more sober and judicial terms, but it was not without foundation. Any system emphatically legalistic and sacerdotal is naturally disinclined to make generous

account of the privilege of the individual to enjoy positive inward assurance of salvation. To do that would involve a more serious qualification of dependence on ecclesiastical mechanism and priestly functioning than it is willing to admit.

That the Roman Catholic system is no exception is historically demonstrated. The foremost expositor of that system in the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas, taught that commonly the believer must be content with a reasonable conjecture that he is in possession of the grace of justification and that assurance is bestowed only as an exceptional gift for the purpose of equipping its subject for extraordinary achievements or sufferings. The language of the Council of Trent is the reverse of an invitation to the faithful to expect an unequivocal ground of confidence through an inward attestation of their standing by the witness of the Holy Spirit. For modern Roman dogmatists the Tridentine decree is, of course, authoritative, and it would be vain to seek in their writings any sanction of the idea that the attainment of a satisfying and luminous certitude of one's standing before God is a normal experience, the privilege of any earnest and devoted Christian. They are logically debarred, in fact, from countenancing the given idea by a ground of dubiety

deeply imbedded in the doctrinal scheme of Romanism. In that scheme the sacraments, notably baptism and penance, are counted indispensable to justification. No one can be justified apart from their reception, or at least apart from the desire and purpose to receive them. But sacraments, according to the authoritative Roman scheme, have no validity apart from the appropriate intention in the ministrant—the intention to use them in the sense of the church. The withholding of that intention in case of the baptism of one who should afterward be inducted into the priesthood, as leaving him destitute of the rite of initiation into the church, would nullify his competency to perform any sacrament dependent upon the priestly standing. Naturally, Roman Catholics are not exhorted to take much account of this ground of dubiety. Nothing is more certain, however, than the conclusion that it lies in their system, inasmuch as the ministrant of a sacrament may possibly be an utter indifferentist or a concealed infidel. One may reasonably believe, that the number of such ministrants has been relatively very small; but it cannot be conducive to mental serenity to have one's salvation hazarded by the possible nullification of an indispensable sacramental grace. We speak of the official

dogmatic teaching and of its logical effect upon the religious life. That elect souls in the Roman Catholic communion have risen above the level of that teaching, any fair-minded historian will gladly admit.

The doctrine of assurance, repristinated at the Reformation, has such indubitable value that we may properly regret to see it subjected to any sacrifice of credibility or appreciation by an overtechnical interpretation. No iron-clad formula as to the precise mode in which assurance is wrought is appropriate. The mode is not a matter for direct perception or insight. The religious person may know well enough how he feels, but the determinants of his feeling lie beyond exact inspection. He can appeal to scriptural sentences in behalf of the fact that the Holy Spirit witnesses to the estate of sonship. But how this is effected is not unequivocally defined by Scripture. Even the most explicit declaration of the apostle Paul affirms only that the action of the Holy Spirit and the movement of a man's own spirit concur to effect a vital impression of sonship.

In just what way the Divine Agent fulfills his part is not stated. Many Christians are persuaded that by a direct mystical utterance in their hearts the Holy Spirit announced their acceptance with God. Others, no less earnest

and devout, have listened long for the mystic voice and have listened in vain. Their experience has led them to conclude ultimately that the Holy Spirit can work effectively in the mediate fashion as well as in the immediate. By enkindling love, trust, and pleasure in doing God's will, he can attest the filial standing. Every element in the filial disposition works toward the conviction of being owned in the filial relationship. Through the fostering, therefore, of the filial disposition toward God the Holy Spirit furnishes the substantial basis of assurance. It springs as naturally from that disposition as the awakened life of the flower unfolds in the blossom. So many a thoughtful Christian has been led by his experience to argue.

This type of experience need not give the standard to all. It certainly suggests, however, that something less technical and specific than the mystic utterance in the soul is a perfectly valid assurance. Indeed, it will be quite safe to say that in whatever way the Holy Spirit may operate at some momentary crisis, *assurance as a standing fact in the normal Christian life* springs from a divinely quickened filial disposition. Whoever is so conditioned that he takes habitual delight in the thought of God, and makes serious quest after his will for the

purpose of fulfilling it, has the very substance of assurance. He has it in the feeling which spring spontaneously from his spiritual possessions, and not through a formal deduction from an inventory of the possessions.

#### IV. THE PRIMACY OF THE BIBLE

The following specifications may serve to outline the characteristic teaching of the reformers on the present theme: (1) the incomparable wealth of the Bible as a source of religious instruction and inspiration; (2) the pre-eminence of biblical authority over that of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; (3) the right and the duty of Christian people in general to read the Holy Book and to search out its meaning.

In the day when Luther broke through the bonds of a futile legalism and felt himself emancipated by the grace of God in Christ, the Bible became to him a book whose pages were alight with the most heartening and salutary truths. Subsequent study as translator, exegete, and preacher in no wise lessened the measure of his appreciation or the ardor of his attachment. To his apprehension the very voice of God spoke through the Bible, and in the affluent content of the divine Word every need of the Christian seemed to him to be met. "Let us," he says, "hold it for certain and



firmly established that the soul can do without everything, except the Word of God, without which none of all its wants are provided for. But having the Word it is rich and wants for nothing; since that is the Word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of justification, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of virtue, of grace, of glory, and of every good thing. . . . The Word of God is the holy of holies, yea, the only holy thing we Christians know and have. Although we were to gather in a heap the bones or consecrated garments of all the saints, they could not help us; for they are all lifeless things and can sanctify no one. God's Word, however, is the treasure that sanctifies everything." In line with the estimate expressed in these sentences is the reformer's declaration that the sacraments have value only as inclosing the Word of God.

The significant feature in Luther's attitude toward the Bible was the overwhelming stress which he placed upon its practical worth and unrivaled function. Herein he represented very largely the reformers in general. The like direction of emphasis is evidenced to a noticeable extent in the early Protestant Confessions. The original Protestant thesis was not in contrast with the Roman Catholic theory as respects the degree of inspiration or inerrant



authority to be accorded to the Scriptures. Luther, in fact, was freer by several degrees to admit a possible errancy in subordinate portions of the Scriptures than were contemporary Roman dogmatists. The language of the Council of Trent lends support to the supposition that the contents of the Old and New Testaments in all their parts were dictated by the Holy Spirit. Melchior Canus, writing near the time of the council, contended that no error, even of a trivial character, can be acknowledged to have place within biblical limits. Bellarmine, a generation or two later, in like manner, ruled out the possible intrusion of error.

Recent pronouncements from the seat of authority have sanctioned the same doctrine. The Vatican Council did so in general terms, and Leo XIII, in the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, reenforced the natural interpretation of its decree in the most explicit statements. No Protestant scholastic of the seventeenth century—not even a Quenstedt—ever put forth a more stalwart affirmation of biblical inerrancy than that which came from the pen of the distinguished pontiff. After noting the tenor of his declarations, one has little occasion to recall such phrases as “absolute truth” or “absolute inerrancy” which recent dogmatists, like Scheeben and Billot, apply to the Scriptures down

to their least item. Manifestly, there is no sort of demand to contrast the formal estimate of biblical authority, as made by original Protestantism, with that of Romanism in the sixteenth or any subsequent century.

It is entirely true nevertheless that the representatives of the great reform accorded to the Bible a function vastly transcending that admitted by contemporary or later Romanism. They claimed for it a right of direct impact upon the individual and the Christian body which the Roman system precluded by the intrusion of what has often been viewed as a double barrier. On the one hand was the assumption of the infallibility of the hierarchy, which involved the conclusion that anything which had once been formally decided could not legitimately be remanded to the tribunal of the Scriptures. On the other hand was the claim to the possession of traditions coordinate in authority with the Scriptures, and so entitled to divide with them the effective direction and control of Christians. As, however, the hierarchy arrogated the right to determine the content of valid tradition, it is evident that the second barrier to the practical supremacy of the Scriptures logically comes under the first, tradition amounting only to another name for the authority of the hierarchy.

As much has been virtually admitted by prominent Roman dogmatists in their declarations that the content of tradition can be fixed apart from searching historical investigation. The admission began as far back as the sixteenth century. "It is an infallible and catholic rule," said Pedro de Soto, "that whatever things the Roman Church believes, holds, and maintains, that are not contained in the Scriptures, were handed down from the apostles." Bellarmine in his day sanctioned the same easy-going expedient for ascertaining apostolic, or authoritative, tradition; and it was clearly asserted in the time of Pius IX by Perrone and Malou. The latter wrote, "As soon as anything is generally accepted in the holy church, the general witness of the living church is an infallible evidence that this truth is contained in tradition, and, indeed, independent of every memorial of antiquity." Who can fail to see that on this basis, the hierarchy, which is absolutely supreme and determines what the living church believes, is released from the necessity of even consulting history? Tradition becomes nothing better than a convenient fiction. The fiat of the existing officary is fully controlling over the issue of any discussion which may arise. All thought of appeal to a higher standard is outlawed.

The vigor with which the reformers challenged the infallibility of the hierarchy, and repudiated its title to lordship over the Scriptures, was well matched by the energy with which they asserted the right of Christians universally to search the Bible and to judge for themselves of the truths relating to their salvation. They may not in all instances have carried out their maxim with due consistency, but they gave it emphatic declaration. "To know and to judge of doctrine," said Luther, "so pertains to each and every Christian that he is worthy of anathema who would detract a hair's breadth from this right." In penning statements of this kind the Reformation leaders were not by any means assuming that the common man is qualified to play the expert in fine exegetical discriminations. Their thought was, rather, that the Bible is the great practical book, not a compendium of riddles and mystical sayings, but a volume so clear and ample in its elucidation of things necessary to salvation that any honest and devout mind can find therein the instruction needed for direction, comfort, and inspiration. This point of view came to definite expression in the Irish Articles and the Westminster Confession. These creeds, it is true, were not composed till the first half of the seventeenth century, but in this matter

they were undoubtedly representative of original Protestantism.

Over against this insistence on the real enthronement of the Bible in popular use what was the policy of the Roman Church? It issued, indeed, no sweeping prohibition of the use of the Bible by laymen. On the other hand, it gave cold encouragement to its use. Every one who looked into its pages was reminded of his solemn obligation to interpret it in the sense of the church. Furthermore, it was counted prudent to curb his judgment by accompanying the text with notes adapted to safeguard the established dogmas. In notable instances evidence of a downright jealousy of the habit of Bible-reading was put on record. For example, in the *Unigenitus* constitution—which Scheeben pronounces a perfectly indubitable specimen of an *ex cathedra* document—condemnation is passed upon this entirely sober and well-sounding proposition from the writings of Quesnel: "The Lord's Day ought to be sanctified on the part of Christians by pious reading, and above all by the perusal of the Holy Scriptures." Several kindred propositions, equally innocent in matter and phrase, were excoriated in this same Jesuitized document.

Possibly some American student might be

inclined to find somewhat of a compensation for the damnatory sentence of the *Unigenitus* in the fact that the fathers of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore put into their pastoral letter a statement which is very nearly an equivalent of that of Quesnel. But the utterance of these fathers has no authority comparable to that attaching to an infallible constitution. Furthermore, it cannot be taken as symptomatic of Roman Catholic policy at large, otherwise a competent witness would not have been able to inform us very recently that millions of homes in South America contain not a single leaf of the Bible.

Other significant tokens of jealousy against a popular use of the Scriptures could be mentioned. We content ourselves with the following brief list: The rules attached to editions of the *Index*, published under the authority of various popes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by which the reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular was confined to definitely recommended persons; the blasts against the work of Bible societies, issued by Pius VII, Gregory XVI, and others; the thrusting into the *Index* of Laserre's translation of the Gospels into French. A papal record filled in with such a content certainly gives no warm encouragement to Bible-reading. No one can



discover in it a tithe of the sentiment which breathes in these words of Coleridge: "Would I withhold the Bible from the cottager and the artisan? Heaven forbend. The fairest flower that ever clomb up a cottage window is not so fair a sight to my eyes as the Bible gleaming through the lower panes."

The significant point in the reformers' estimate of the Bible, as has been indicated, was not a technical theory respecting the controlling or exclusive agency of the Holy Spirit in the production of the Bible. It was, rather, a mighty stress upon the incomparable worth and sufficiency of the religious contents of the Bible. Herein their message ought to reach across the centuries to us in never-diminishing power. We truly enter into and conserve our inheritance only as the great truths of the Bible are permitted to engage our habitual contemplation, and to illuminate our souls as the rising sun illuminates the landscape.

#### V. ANTI-SACERDOTALISM, OR LIMITATION OF PRIESTLY SOVEREIGNTY

Every one of the doctrines of the Reformation to which attention has been given is intrinsically adapted to serve as a barrier against sacerdotalism. A decree of emancipation of Christians from an exaggerated de-



pendence on priestly offices and from an unqualified subjection to priestly demands was involved in their publication. If the individual can be justified by his faith, if in the inherent potency of this faith a basis of personal assurance of salvation is provided, and if it is the right of the individual to go directly to the Scriptures and to find there all strictly needful instruction in matters vitally concerning his salvation, then the lordship of the priest, and indeed of the whole ecclesiastical hierarchy, over him is substantially vanquished. The priest can still serve as a valuable adviser, admonisher, and helper, but the role of lordship has become foreign to him. Men can be saved without asking or obtaining his consent.

The great work of the reformers against sacerdotalism, wrought through the medium of the doctrines already considered, was supplemented in various ways. A notable limitation of priestly supereminence and sovereignty was involved in the universal priesthood of believers which they asserted in common. This meant, not that any man of his own motion could fitly undertake to administer sacraments and to discharge other ministerial or priestly functions, but only that he is intrinsically eligible to the undertaking of the functions should the conditions so advise and his fellow

Christians give their consent. Luther gave a luminous exposition of this point as follows: "If a little company of pious Christian laymen were taken prisoners and carried away to a desert, and had not among them a priest consecrated by a bishop, and were there to agree to elect one of them, married or unmarried, and were to order him to baptize, to celebrate the mass, to absolve and to preach, this man would as truly be a priest, as if all the bishops and all the popes had consecrated him. . . . Since we are all priests alike, no man may put himself forward, or take upon himself, without our consent and election, to do that which we have all alike power to do. For, if a thing is common to all, no man may take it to himself without the wish and command of the community." In this view the priest is distinguished solely by his official position and the functions connected therewith. When he has once been stripped of these nothing remains to differentiate him from a common Christian. A thought very much like that expressed by Luther was in the mind of Zwingli when he said: "All Christians are brethren of Christ, and brethren among themselves, and therefore ought not to call any one father upon earth."

In another way the reformers qualified the supereminence and prerogative of the priest.

They did this in the trend and outcome of their teaching on the sacraments. Without exception they denied the Roman assumption that the priest is master of the sacramental grace, as having power to nullify the rite which he assumes to perform by withholding the proper intention. Again, the reformers limited the scope of dependence upon the official administrant of ceremonies by limiting the number of the sacraments. In general, they decided for excluding from that category all rites except baptism and the eucharist. Luther was, indeed, inclined to retain absolution. However, he greatly reduced its significance as a prop to sacerdotalism by maintaining that any Christian is competent to give the absolving sentence to a brother who may confess to him the sins which burden his conscience. Luther's preference for the retention of absolution was not controlling even among Lutherans. The Protestant consensus was decidedly in favor of classing only baptism and the eucharist among sacraments. The limitation involved a decided curtailment of priestly sovereignty, especially by the shutting out of the sacrament of penance with its combination of auricular confession and priestly absolution.

Furthermore, the reformers modified the conception of the retained sacraments in such

wise as to make them in less degree auxiliary to priestly exaltation. In their interpretation of the eucharist they wholly excluded the Roman assumption that it is a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead. In connection with both baptism and the eucharist they modified the overplus of magic and mysticism which had been intruded. Here the legitimate goal of the Reformation movement, it must be confessed, was not at once fully reached. Luther, reacting from Anabaptist fervors, halted in the way, and his influence effected that in some quarters an undue scope was given to sacramental mysticism and efficiency. Still, notable progress was made. In the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England a view closely approaching Zwingli's rational conception of the nature and functions of the sacraments came to expression. Later, in the Westminster Confession the thoroughly consistent Protestant declaration was made that grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to the sacraments that no one can be saved without them.

It hardly needs to be observed that this outcome, logically involved in Reformation postulates, and now acknowledged on every hand in genuinely Protestant territory, stands

in sharp contrast with the ultra sacramentalism enthroned in Roman Catholicism. In that domain the doctrine prevails that all infants dying unbaptized are everlastingly excluded from the kingdom of heaven. So the Tridentine Catechism affirms in very explicit terms. The affirmation is repeated in the standard Roman Catholic dictionaries and encyclopedias, and in the writings of well-nigh the whole body of dogmatists, the dissentients being so few that Billot feels authorized to say, "Theologians are unanimously agreed in this: the actual sacrament has been in any time whatsoever an altogether necessary means of salvation to all those who have never had the use of reason."

For non-Catholics, who have reached the age of rational choice and action, the outlook, on the basis of Roman teaching, is equally somber, since any remote chance for their salvation which may be admitted is more than offset by the fact that they are exposed, not merely to endless exclusion from the kingdom of heaven, but to the positive tortures of hell. Any one of them who has fallen into any serious transgression, at least after baptism, must have recourse to the sacrament of penance, in act or in desire, in order to gain remission. According to the Tridentine decisions even perfect contrition will not avail apart from the sacra-

ment without the interposition of a desire for the same. Something has indeed been said in comparatively recent times about the possible salvation of those who, being bound by invincible ignorance, are true to the light given them. But, aside from the difficulty of reconciling such a view with the infallible decisions of the Council of Trent, as also with the blunt declaration of the Council of Florence that salvation is impossible for any not joined to the Catholic Church before death, it must be rated as having logically only a paltry significance.

Holiness, we are told by the authorities, is distinctly a mark of the Roman Catholic Church. To admit, therefore, that any considerable proportion of those outside its sacred borders are so extraordinarily exemplary as to be veritably true to the light given them, would make a mock of its proud claim to be distinctively the domain of the holy. In the remorseless system of Rome no door of escape from dooming, without appreciable exception, the innumerable multitude destitute of the benefit of her sacraments is provided. Of course we are not so uncharitable as to suppose that Roman Catholics in the mass hold consciously to a creed of wholesale and gratuitous damnation; but that such a creed is contained



in pronouncements which they are supposed to be under obligation to accept, is undeniable.

A very important restriction on sacerdotal assumption and aggression was instituted by the reformers through their challenge of the necessity of a hierarchical constitution of the church. Not only did they repudiate the papal monarchy as representing a most unwarrantable usurpation, but they disallowed that even the episcopate is an indispensable factor in church constitution. It was retained in the Scandinavian countries and in England; nowhere, however, in the territory of the Reformation was it counted essential to ecclesiastical validity. The Church of England, at the initial stage, formed no exception. It was not till the time of Laud that the High Church shibboleth began to be repeated in earnest. The representative men of the English Church in the sixteenth century, such as Jewel, Parker, and Whitgift, had no thought of claiming exclusive validity for the episcopal constitution. Bancroft seems to be on record as asserting it in 1589, but he repudiated it in practice more than twenty years later. In the theory of original Protestantism the way was unmistakably left open to a democratic organization of the church.

On the proper relation between church and



state the Reformation standpoint was widely distinguished from the sacerdotal platform. The representatives of the former discountenanced the idea that any right of authoritative direction of the administration of the state resides in the ecclesiastical power. Indeed, it cannot well be denied, that in practice they often conceded to the state a larger function in the management of the church than they claimed for the church in supervising the affairs of the state. This course, however, was not so much the dictate of a theoretical preference as the result of the pressing exigencies by which the Protestant communions were confronted. In the midst of the struggle for existence they naturally were not disinclined to welcome the support of a strong ally, and to make concessions in return for the support. Independently of the demands arising out of special conditions coordination of the two powers, as opposed to any pronounced subordination of either was the plan most congenial to the Protestant consciousness.

Clear tokens of this were not wanting. The Swiss reformer *Æcolampadius* strongly advocated the relative independence of the church. Calvin, however he may have shaped the administration at Geneva, was committed in his general theory to the same view. It may be

said, indeed, that in the proper Calvinian theory church and state were rated as coordinate powers, having each its own province, and neither being legitimately reduced to a mere dependency of the other. As for the German reformer, in so far as he tolerated the intervention of state authority, it was not at all with the idea that the use of force is congenial to the interests of religion. "Luther," says Ranke, "was of all men who have stood at the head of a movement world-wide in its significance, the one perhaps who was least inclined to have anything to do with force and war."

The Roman Catholic theory on the normal relation between church and state stood then, and remains still, in complete contrast. Boniface VIII, in the bull *Unam Sanctam*, repudiated the idea that the state possesses an authority in any wise coordinate with that of the church as no better than Manichæan dualism. "There is," he said, "one body, one head. Therefore the temporal authority should be subject to the spiritual." This was a mediæval pronouncement. But an ample list of parallels was supplied in the nineteenth century. Phillips, a distinguished expositor of canon law, wrote, "A glance at the difference between spiritual and worldly sovereignty shows the impossibility of coordination." E. S. Purcell

declared in an essay, having the apparent approval of Archbishop Manning: "The state is not competent to determine by its own authority its proper range and sphere; these are shaped out for it by the action of the church." Liberatore maintained that the bull *Unam Sanctam*, as having been confirmed by Leo X and the Fifth Lateran Council, is of decisive dogmatic weight, and in harmony with its content he affirmed: "According to Catholic doctrine, the civil power bears comparison to the spiritual as the body to the soul." Other writers could be cited to the same effect, and consistently supplementing the whole list we have the deeds and words of the popes. Pius IX in several instances formally pronounced state laws null and void. Leo XIII prudently refrained from this extreme in action, but that he did not lag behind his predecessor in theory is sufficiently indicated by these words in the encyclical of January 10, 1890: "Both that which ought to be believed and that which ought to be done the church by divine right teaches, and in the church the supreme Pontiff. It belongs to the Pontiff not only to rule the church, but in general so to order the action of Christian citizens, that they may be in suitable accord with the hope of obtaining eternal salvation."

Combining the assumption of the supremacy of the spiritual power over the temporal with the absoluteness of the pope in the government of the church and his infallibility in the determination of doctrine, we have in the papacy, as now authoritatively defined, the most consummate autocracy, theoretically speaking, that it ever entered the heart of man to conceive. Who will care to deny that such an autocracy must be perfectly intolerable except on the supposition that its possessors will unfailingly be clothed with attributes of wisdom and virtue scarcely less than divine? To this supposition, as we have endeavored to show in the volume on "Sacerdotalism in the Nineteenth Century," history gives the lie over and over again. It follows that the Reformation bequeathed an immeasurable benefit in preparing for a modern world in which the papal autocracy, though unrestricted in theory, is rendered largely impotent in practice. In this benefit Roman Catholics, even those resident in predominantly Roman Catholic countries, share to a conspicuous degree. Let them pay their respects to the heroic men of the sixteenth century whose words and deeds were a potent factor in securing their exemption, as members of the state, from an irresponsible ecclesiastical overlordship.

We make no attempt to idealize the reformers. In such a tremendous revolt from the old order and rapid transition to the new, as occurred in the sixteenth century, faults both in teaching and practice, were well-nigh inevitable. Nevertheless, those hardy thinkers and workers conferred upon subsequent generations a priceless boon. Through the publication of doctrines which come near the heart of the Gospel, and through effective protest against an ironclad ecclesiasticism—which was bound by its inherent tendencies and the demands of its perpetuation to throttle liberty and to build up walls against progress—they have placed both religious and civil society under great and perpetual obligations. May the day never come, in earthly history, when their achievements shall cease to be gratefully remembered. Throughout the length and breadth of the Protestant communions may a vital appreciation of the great Reformation inheritance be shown in the cultivation of a **LIVING PROTESTANT CONSCIOUSNESS**.

ESSAY VII

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AS ROMAN  
CATHOLIC APOLOGIST





## ESSAY VII

### JOHN HENRY NEWMAN AS ROMAN CATHOLIC APOLOGIST<sup>1</sup>

THE elaborate biography of Newman by Wilfrid Ward reenforces the evidence, which had been given previously in Purcell's *Life of Manning*, that the Tractarian leader, in going over to Rome in 1845, did not gain altogether congenial relationships. In his chosen task of justifying and commending Roman Catholicism, Newman found himself thwarted by the practical obstacles that were thrown in the way of his ambition to serve in the field of theological education, and was afflicted by tokens of distrust too plain to be misinterpreted. The acme of distrust and of effective hostility was lodged in the extreme Ultramontane party in England, represented by Manning, W. G. Ward, and others; but apart from their influence, which, indeed, was not small, there was a tendency at Rome and among stalwart Ultramontanists generally to look askance at Newman. While it was felt that on the score of his antecedents and connections he ought to be

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<sup>1</sup>Reprinted from *The Methodist Review* (Nashville).

of great value in furthering the Roman cause in England, and that it would be very impolitic to visit him with any open sign of displeasure, the attitude toward him for a large part of his career was quite lacking in confidence and friendliness. At one point there was even a move toward official censure. An article which Newman contributed to the *Rambler*, on "Consulting the Laity," was made a ground of formal complaint at Rome. George Talbot, who acted as agent for Manning at the Vatican, writing April 25, 1867, some years after the publication of the offending article, used this strong language: "It is perfectly true that a cloud has been hanging over Dr. Newman in Rome ever since the Bishop of Newport delated him to Rome for heresy in his article in the *Rambler* on consulting the laity on matters of faith. None of his writings since have removed that cloud. Every one of them has created a controversy, and the spirit of them has never been approved in Rome."<sup>2</sup> Doubtless it may be said that shortly after this communication was written, the attitude toward Newman at the papal court showed signs of improvement, among which the most conspicuous was the extension to him of an invitation to act as an advisory theologian in connection with the

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<sup>2</sup>Wilfrid Ward, *Life of John Henry Newman*, II, p. 146.

Vatican Council. The fact, however, remains that, on the whole, it was a frigid appreciation which was accorded to him by official Romanism and its more zealous clients throughout the pontificate of Pius IX (1846–1878).

Evidence in support of this conclusion is supplied in abundant measure by correspondence and memoranda of Newman reaching over a wide stretch of years. In 1848 he had occasion to write: "These old priests will be satisfied with nothing—they have pursued us with criticisms ever since we were Catholics."<sup>3</sup> He made the following record in 1863: "When Monsell was in Rome, he came back with the remark that I had no friend at Rome."<sup>4</sup> In 1866, referring to the necessity of guarding against criticism at Rome, he remarked: "To write theology is like dancing on the tight rope some hundred feet above ground. It is hard to keep from falling and the fall is great."<sup>5</sup> The next year he penned this statement: "There is no doubt that I am looked at with suspicion at Rome, because I will not go the whole hog in all the extravagances of the school of the day, and I cannot move my finger without giving offense."<sup>6</sup> In 1868 he passed this comment on the characteristic attitude of

<sup>3</sup>Ward, *Life of Newman*, I, p. 216.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, I, p. 587.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, II, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, II, p. 188.

ecclesiastical dignitaries toward himself: "I have found in the Catholic Church abundance of courtesy, but very little sympathy among persons in high place, except a few."<sup>7</sup> With this may be compared his remark in 1875: "I have had more to try and afflict me in various ways as a Catholic than as an Anglican."<sup>8</sup> In his private journal he made this entry in 1878: "I have before now said in writing to Cardinals Wiseman and Barnabo, when I considered myself treated with slight and unfairness, 'So this is the return made to me for working for the Catholic cause for many years,' that is, to that effect, I feel it still, and ever shall—but it was not a disappointed ambition which I was then expressing in words, but a scorn and wonder at the injustice shown me, and at the demand for toadyism on my part if I was to get their favor and the favor of Rome."<sup>9</sup> When in 1879 he was made cardinal he welcomed the honor on the specific ground that it was an effectual means of lifting the "cloud" which had rested upon him.<sup>10</sup>

That the temper of Leo XIII wrought in some measure to induce a more favorable attitude toward Newman need not be doubted.

<sup>7</sup>Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, postscript.

<sup>8</sup>Ward, I, p. 201. <sup>9</sup>Ibid., II, p. 433. <sup>10</sup>Ibid., II, p. 438.

But it would be a mistake to interpret the advancement to the cardinalate as a token that official Romanism had come to regard the arch-convert with entire satisfaction. A principal motive in pressing for the bestowment of this honor, as appears from the express declarations of the Duke of Norfolk, was a wish to take away the obstacle to Newman's efficiency as a Romanist propagandist which lay in the impression disseminated by his opponents that he was no faithful representative of Roman Catholic beliefs.<sup>11</sup> It is altogether probable that this motive had great weight with the sagacious pontiff. The exaltation to the cardinalate testifies, therefore, quite as much to administrative prudence as to interior indorsement of the subject of the exaltation, though it is not necessary to deny to a man of the mental breadth of Leo XIII a measure of appreciation of the talented Englishman.

## II

In seeking an explanation of the distrust entertained toward Newman in a large part of the Roman Catholic domain, our attention is directed, in the first place, to his theory of doctrinal development—the theory that prom-

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., II, p. 436.

inent features of the creed and worship of the Roman Catholic Church proceeded from obscure beginnings, and attained to distinct expression and general recognition only by a process of evolution through considerable periods. This point of view, which was given full expression, near the time of his exit from Anglicanism, in the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, struck conservative Romanists as being very much of a novelty. It is true that Perrone at the same period was advocating a similar theory, to the end of justifying the publication of the immaculate conception of the Virgin as a dogma of the faith, and that pontifical authority was not averse to making a virtual resort to the position of the Jesuit theologian in its determination to publish that dogma. But it is one thing to make a practical use of a theory for a special predetermined end, and quite another thing to license any such broad and open assertion of it as was made by Newman. His exposition of doctrinal development was too much in contrast with the customary representation not to be regarded as dubious and unsettling, if not, indeed, plainly heterodox. To criticize openly the distinguished convert was for Romanists a rather embarrassing task. But adverse comment was not kept wholly



under cover. The most famous of American converts to Romanism, O. A. Brownson, began forthwith to brandish a hostile weapon with characteristic vigor. Having outlined Newman's view, he proceeds with this comment: "We ask, Does the Church herself take this view? Most assuredly not. She asserts that there has been no progress, no increase, no variation of faith; that what she believes and teaches now is precisely what she has always taught from the first; that a new definition implies no improved understanding of the faith, but is to be rated simply as a practical expedient against the novel expressions of the enemies of religion."<sup>12</sup> This language put the conservative standpoint in the crassest form, but it may serve to indicate the recoil against Newman's teaching on doctrinal development that was felt in minds accustomed to take at their face value the assumptions of popes and councils on the antiquity of all the articles of the accepted creed.

Not only the general contention of Newman relative to doctrinal development, but various details in his treatment of the subject were calculated to afflict strict traditionalists. It was scarcely agreeable to them to be told that Scripture, taken in its plain sense, afforded no

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<sup>12</sup> Brownson's Quarterly Review, July, 1846,



adequate basis for the doctrinal structure of Rome, as they were in effect told in this declaration: "It may almost be laid down as an historical fact, that the mystical interpretation and orthodoxy will stand and fall together."<sup>13</sup> In respect of the papacy it could hardly be otherwise than disquieting to read that "a pope would not arise but in proportion as the church was consolidated";<sup>14</sup> or that "Christianity developed in the form, first, of a Catholic, then of a papal church."<sup>15</sup> On the subject of the Virgin Mary's rightful position, it was not exactly pleasant to be reminded that "there was in the first ages no public and ecclesiastical recognition of the place which St. Mary holds in the economy of grace;"<sup>16</sup> or that the Nestorian controversy in the fifth century, in the prominence which it secured to Mary, was instrumental in supplying "the subject of that august proposition of which Arianism had provided the predicate";<sup>17</sup> or that it is a matter for question whether Augustine, in all his voluminous writings, invokes the Virgin in a single instance.<sup>18</sup> In relation to confession, it was not

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<sup>13</sup> Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, 1846, p. 324.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 407.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Letter to E. B. Pusey on Occasion of his Eirenicon.

conducive to dogmatic complacency to be informed that the confessional proper was foreign to the primitive Christian age, since "confession and penance were at first public."<sup>19</sup> Not less disquieting than any one of the above particulars must have been the lesson on the indebtedness of Catholic truth and usage to heresy, enforced as that lesson was in these emphatic sentences: "The doctrines even of the heretical bodies are indices and anticipations of the mind of the church. . . . Not in one principle or doctrine only, but in its whole system, Montanism is a remarkable anticipation or presage of developments which soon began to show themselves in the church, though they were not perfected for centuries after. . . . The doctrinal determinations and the ecclesiastical usages of the Middle Ages are the true fulfillment of its self-willed and abortive attempts at precipitating the growth of the church."<sup>20</sup> In this whole line of specifications Newman may have run close to historic fact, but that could not go far in recommending his type of apology to those who preferred to have history keep silence where it refused to speak in harmony with long-standing and dominant traditions. Those who held, even approximately, the point of view expressed in

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<sup>19</sup>Essay, p. 365.<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 349-351.

the citation from Brownson could but stand in doubt as to the service which the English convert was rendering to the defense of the faith.

With one great wing of the Roman Catholic Church, namely, that which was heartily committed to the program of Pius IX, as expressed in the Syllabus of Errors and the decrees of the Vatican Council, there was a distinct reason for distrusting and disparaging Newman. For he made it evident that he was deeply opposed to that program. The ground of this opposition did not lie in the theoretical Ultramontaniam which the program represented. In theory Newman was quite reconciled to a high estimate of papal prerogatives. But he counted it impolitic to flaunt the theory in the face of the age, and worse than impolitic to exploit it in the interest of a consolidated and absolutist rule in the church. From this standpoint he deplored the issuing of the Syllabus in 1864 and the passing of the infallibility decree by the Vatican Council in 1870. Respecting the former he wrote privately, "The advisers of the Holy Father seem determined to make our position in England as difficult as ever they can."<sup>21</sup> At a later date, in response to Gladstone's ex-coriation of the Syllabus, he publicly indicated

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<sup>21</sup>Ward, *Life of Newman*, II, p. 81.

his pronounced dissatisfaction with the papal document by minifying its dogmatic authority in such terms as only one who fervently wished it out of sight could have used.<sup>22</sup> In relation to the work of the Vatican Council, he gave still more emphatic expression to his sore disappointment. Writing to Bishop Ullathorne, January 28, 1870, he complained: "No impending danger is to be averted, but a great difficulty is to be created. . . . I look with anxiety at the prospect of having to defend decisions which may not be difficult to my private judgment, but may be most difficult to defend logically in the face of historic facts. . . . Why should an aggressive and insolent faction be allowed to make the hearts of the just to mourn whom the Lord hath not made sorrowful?"<sup>23</sup> In a letter to another correspondent he strongly reprobated the haste of the champions of the new dogma. "You must prepare men's minds," he said, "for the doctrine, and you must not flout the existing tradition of centuries. The tradition of Ireland, the tradition of England, is not on the side of papal infallibility. You know how recent Ultramontane views are in both countries; so too of France; so of Germany. . . .

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<sup>22</sup>Letter to the Duke of Norfolk.

<sup>23</sup>Ward, II, p. 288.

Hardly any murmured at the act of 1854 (the declaration of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin); half of the Catholic world is in fright at the proposed act of 1870."<sup>24</sup> Referring to the discovery that the declaration of infallibility had long been intended, though studiously passed by in official announcements respecting the Council, he added: "Is this the way the faithful were ever treated before? . . . To outsiders like me it would seem as if a grave dogmatic question was being treated merely as a move in ecclesiastical politics." A few days after the passage of the Infallibility decree, he expressed a doubt whether it had claimed the moral unanimity necessary for a truly ecumenical decision, and intimated that the verdict upon this point would depend upon the future conduct of the dissenting bishops.<sup>25</sup> In the following year, while affirming that the imposition of the Vatican dogma made no burden for himself, he declared: "It is impossible to deny that it was done with an imperiousness and overbearing willfulness which has been a great scandal."<sup>26</sup> These sharp strictures on the Vatican platform, though expressed primarily

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<sup>24</sup>Letter to Dr. Whitty, April 12, 1870 (Ward, II, p. 296).

<sup>25</sup>Cited in Letter to the Duke of Norfolk.

<sup>26</sup>Ward, II, p. 380.

in private correspondence, naturally served to reveal Newman's position in a sufficient degree to cause him to be associated with the foes of that platform. Moreover, contrary to his expectation, the letter to Bishop Ullathorne was early given to the public. It was inevitable, therefore, that in the church in which the Vatican platform triumphed, he could not be in the full sense *persona grata*, or be accounted an entirely trustworthy exponent of the approved system.

It was noticed above that Newman's position on the advisability of consulting the laity was adjudged sufficiently singular to cause a complaint to be preferred against him at Rome. That he was really at variance with the Roman trend on this subject appears in this statement, which he penned in 1865: "At Rome they treat the laity according to the tradition of the Middle Ages, as, in Harold the Dauntless, the Abbot of Durham treated Count Witi-kind. Well, facts alone will slowly make them recognize the fact of what a laity must be in the nineteenth century if it is to cope with Protestantism."<sup>27</sup> Neither in his own time, nor since the rise of Modernism, with its insistence on conceding to the laity a larger sphere of influence in the counsels of the

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., II, p. 69.



church, could this phase in Newman's thinking commend him to official Romanism.

On another point Newman exhibited himself as at variance with the trend of Roman teaching. He was not pleased with the action of the Vatican Council in installing an ironclad theory of the Bible as being in all parts inerrantly inspired or "dictated" by the Holy Spirit. In a letter bearing date of June 7, 1870, he wrote: "It seems to me that a perfectly new platform of doctrine is created, as regards our view of Scripture, by these new canons—so far as this, that if their primary and surface meaning is to be evaded, it must be by a set of explanations heretofore not necessary."<sup>28</sup> At a later date (1883) Newman gave open expression to the view that an occasional error in subordinate matters of fact, or *obiter dicta*, may be contained in the Bible. Herein, as his biographer admits,<sup>29</sup> he collided with the current theory of Roman orthodoxy. That theory admits of no errors in the Scriptures, though some of its representatives make bold to grant in effect the presence of errors, and adjust themselves to the orthodox shibboleth by the unholy shift of refusing to apply the name of errors to things which in simple and honest speech can be called nothing else.

<sup>28</sup>Ward, II, pp. 294, 295.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., II, p. 504.



It is seen, then, that the sticklers for the traditional type of Romanism had, whether to their credit or discredit, some real grounds of objection to Newman. From their point of view he was a faulty expositor and an injudicious defender of the faith. They took a certain pride in his conversion, and hoped that it might be of substantial service to Roman propagandism; but still they were more or less disturbed by the tone of his writings, and were disposed to view his apologetic efforts with a shake of the head and a whisper of dissent.

### III

Thus far we have considered not so much the merits of Newman's apologetic work as the distrust and opposition that he encountered from the side of the very Romanism which he was so anxious to commend, especially to the men of the English race. We have now to consider how that work must be judged in the light of historical and rational evidences. In the execution of this task, account will need to be taken of some half-dozen of the apologist's writings, including the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, *Difficulties Felt by Anglicans on Catholic Teaching*, the *Letter to*

Pusey, the Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent, and the Letter to the Duke of Norfolk.

That Newman figures in these writings as a very ingenious and accomplished advocate, no unprejudiced reader will care to deny. But was he really successful in making out a case for Rome? Our conviction is that he fell so far short of this end that his apologetic efforts serve rather to emphasize the hopelessness of the cause which he advocated than to place it in a favorable light. Not one of his characteristic expedients will stand close examination.

Take his theory of doctrinal development, by which he sought to justify the ultimate Roman Catholic system in spite of its apparent contrast with the system in vogue in the early centuries. That he was right in admitting the fact of development cannot reasonably be disputed. As compared with such an apologist as Brownson he possessed an historic sense immensely superior. But has he given any credible demonstration that the development within Roman Catholic lines was normal, and resulted within those lines in dogmas certified to be infallible? It is far from discernible that he has done anything of the sort. His dealing with development is subject to challenge as practically ignoring

a capital test of normal progress, namely, the maintenance of due proportion, the avoidance of excess. Advance from a given starting-point may be as gradual as you please; no great chasms may seem to be leaped in the onward movement; and yet the outcome may be utterly abnormal. Pharisaic Judaism started from a praiseworthy reverence for "the law" as the expressed will of Jehovah, and it advanced by slow degrees toward its goal. But what was the goal? Legalism run mad, enslavement to a detailed code, the spurning of all outside the people of the law as an unclean and outcast domain. Through simple excess the development ran into caricature and utter perversion.

Newman does not formally deny that serious distortion of truth may result from a movement showing a high degree of continuity. He pays, however, no adequate attention to this liability. Indeed, he may be said to make a mock of it in one or another connection. This holds of his representation of the honors paid progressively to the Virgin Mary. "Prayers for the faithful departed," he says, "may be found in the early liturgies, yet with an indistinctness which included the blessed Virgin and the martyrs in the same rank with the imperfect Christians whose sins were yet

unexpiated; and succeeding times might keep what was exact and supply what was deficient.”<sup>30</sup> When it is remembered that “succeeding times” revered Mary as the crowned queen of heaven, who is so far from needing prayers that all are contrariwise dependent upon the invincible efficacy of her intercessions, it evidently requires a remarkable mental feat to unite the extremes—the habit of mind which permitted prayers for Mary and the habit of mind which rules them out as appallingly incongruous or sacrilegious. If this is to be called legitimate development, then evidently no development can forfeit that title by bringing in the contradictory of its starting-point. A later reference of Newman to views about Mary in the early church is by no means calculated to modify the impression that it is only by an abusive application of the idea of development that our apologist can use it to justify later Roman doctrine and practice. In the “Letter to Pusey on Occasion of His Eirenicon” he admits that such eminent fathers as Basil, Chrysostom, and possibly also Cyril of Alexandria, attributed to Mary certain actual faults in conduct. To this list of fathers he ought to have added Irenæus, of the second century and

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<sup>30</sup> Essay on Development, 1846, p. 354.

Origen of the third.<sup>31</sup> He ought, furthermore, to have noticed that theologians found it easier to exempt Mary from actual faults than from inheritance of the Adamic taint, or original sin, as is illustrated by instances of great doctors who asserted the latter while rejecting the former.

Duly weighing the significance of these facts, what inference could anyone draw but that in the conviction of the early church—the same church which reckoned Mary among the imperfect dead—there was so little of a basis for the modern dogma of the immaculate conception that the very opposite of such a basis was present? Development of the kind which installed this dogma, we submit, refutes the claim of the Roman system, as involving not a perfecting, but a denial, of the original type.

On the subject of the papacy likewise, Newman's attempt to apply the notion of development must be regarded as a very inadequate apologetic expedient. Advance in official prerogatives might be legitimate up to a certain point, but failing to stop at that point might eventuate in a sovereignty which robs intellect and conscience of their proper functions, and

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<sup>31</sup>Irenæus, *Cont. Hær.*, iii, 16. 7; Origen, *In Luc.*, Hom. xvi.

virtually obtrudes a limited and peccable man into the place which belongs to Almighty God alone. That Newman has shown that the concentration of authority in the Bishop of Rome stopped at the right point, is by no means in evidence. In the language already cited—"Christianity developed in the form, first, of a Catholic, then of a papal church"—he as much as declared that there was no genuine pope in the early church. To the like effect is his statement that in the post-apostolic age "first the power of the bishop displayed itself, and then the power of the pope."<sup>32</sup> As respects the dogma of papal infallibility, he expressed grave doubt whether the popes themselves had any clear understanding of it in the time of Cyprian.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, as has been noticed, he testified that half of the Catholic world was in fright before the image of pontifical sovereignty set up in the Vatican Council. What assurance does he furnish us that the transition from the essentially nonpapal regime of the early church to the unqualified absolutism dogmatically asserted in the Vatican decrees was wrought out by a legitimate development? None that is not pitifully inadequate to the

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<sup>32</sup>Essay on Development, 1846, p. 165.

<sup>33</sup>Ward, II, p. 378.

demand. He gives a list of facts indicative of a growing recognition of the importance of the Roman bishop.<sup>34</sup> But these facts, so far as related to the ante-Nicene period, are few in number and very limited in significance, while in the post-Nicene period the record of the ecumenical councils shows to a demonstration that the position accorded to the bishop of Rome, in the deliberate judgment of the church as a whole, was at a vast remove from the unlimited monarchy decreed by the Vatican Council. For both the ante-Nicene and the post-Nicene periods the facts cited by the apologist give no valid evidence as to the original or divinely appointed constitution of the church, being such as would naturally be evolved in the progress of the episcopate from a comparatively undifferentiated state toward an aristocratic or patriarchate system. In that evolution Rome, as a great world-center, would inevitably secure to its episcopal representative a certain advantage over all rivals. But an explanation of this kind is not a dogmatic justification of what occurred in the patristic period, and much less of the scheme of papal absolutism which pope and Jesuits succeeded in promulgating in the second half of the nineteenth century. In framing his

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<sup>34</sup>Essay on Development, 1878, pp. 157-165.



argument Newman is much too easy-going. He cannot be said to have wrestled at all seriously with the staggering objections to papal supremacy and infallibility which are embodied in the decisions of councils and in the deliverances and conduct of popes.<sup>35</sup> In the face of these unyielding objections, it is vain for him to appeal, as he does,<sup>36</sup> to the need of the continued presence of an infallible guide. Convenience, real or fancied, cannot be allowed to overrule the evidence of facts.

An occasion for a special turn in his apology for papal supremacy and infallibility was given to Newman by Gladstone's impeachment of the Vatican decrees as placing civil allegiance at the mercy of a foreign autocrat. In the reply rendered to the eminent statesman there are two considerations which call in particular for comment.<sup>37</sup> On the one hand, he contended that papal manifestoes to which the character of infallibility attaches are very rarely issued; on the other hand, he urged that the determination of the scope of infallibility falls properly to the *schola theo-*

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<sup>35</sup>For fuller evidence see the present writer's *Sacerdotalism in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 137-221.

<sup>36</sup>Essay on Development, 1846, pp. 126, 127; *Apologia*, 1887, p. 245.

<sup>37</sup>The reply was in the form of a "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk."

*logorum*, the body of doctrinal teachers in the church, which may be expected to pay good heed to the demands of sobriety. Neither consideration, however, affords security against interference with Roman Catholic allegiance. No one can prescribe how often a pontiff invested with absolute authority shall indulge in the luxury of an *ex cathedra* or "infallible" decree. Moreover, the obligation to obey is not limited to utterances that conform to this description. As Newman himself admits, Catholics are bound to give heed to any administrative requirement of the pope, and cannot plead conscience as excusing them from obedience except in cases so extraordinary as to be practically out of the field of expectation. "Obedience to the pope," he says, "is what is called 'in possession'; that is, the *onus probandi* of establishing a case against him lies, as in all cases of exception, on the side of conscience." As to the *schola theologorum*, plain logic would seem to dictate that it would effect little or nothing in the direction of restricting the sovereignty of a pope formally declared to be possessed of an *independent* infallibility. Then, too, historic fact comes in with its demonstration. Leo XIII emphasized the instrumental relation of theological faculties to papal sovereignty by a most determined effort to

enthroned Thomas Aquinas over their teaching, and Pius X most emphatically reminded them of their subservient position by requiring them to submit for approval the text of their lectures in advance of their delivery. It seems, accordingly, that Newman failed also in this connection to meet the demands of effective apology. If he had urged that Roman Catholics, in the main, could be trusted not to sacrifice civil allegiance to the demands of obedience to the pope, he would have said something practically pertinent to the issue; but, of course, in theory such an affirmation, as leaving no bar to papal aggressions except the probable inconsistency of the pope's subjects, would have been very awkward and troublesome.

Among all his apologetic writings the *Essay in Aid to a Grammar of Assent* was the one on which Newman expended most pains, and he probably regarded it as of the greatest significance. There can be no doubt also that he was persuaded that it was adapted to fulfill a defensive function, not merely for theistic or for Christian faith in general, but for the Roman Catholic system in particular. Indeed, he has said that the scope of its arguments from beginning to end is the truth of the Catholic religion,<sup>38</sup> and by "Catholic" he

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<sup>38</sup>Note appended, December, 1880.

undoubtedly meant Roman Catholic. Now, an examination of the treatise shows that a large part of it has no bearing in good logic upon the truth even of Christianity in general, and that the part of it which makes for the truth of Roman Catholicism is too meager to convince any one not thoroughly predisposed to be convinced. The first half of this proposition finds its warrant in the fact that much space is given to an exposition of the bare method by which subjective certainty, or personal assurance, is gained. In dealing with this theme, Newman emphasizes the consideration that the real grounds of conviction are by no means confined to definitely formulated or formulable reasons. "I think it is the fact," he says, "that many of our most obstinate and reasonable certitudes depend on proofs which are informal and personal, which baffle our powers of analysis, and cannot be brought under logical rule, because they cannot be submitted to logical statistics."<sup>39</sup> It is essentially this point of view which he subsumes under the *illative sense*, denoting by the singular phrase, according to his biographer, "the power of spontaneous action in human reason, whereby it draws its conclusions from premises of which it is only in part explicitly

<sup>39</sup>Grammar of Assent, 1870, p. 289.

conscious, and judges those conclusions to be warranted."<sup>40</sup> That Newman here describes a process which often is exemplified in judgments of truth, need not be denied. But what he offers is mere psychological description, and psychological description by itself has no competency to evolve a trustworthy standard or to validate any particular subject-matter. The method which he elucidates can just as well be thought of as operating within the bounds of Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or any other namable system, as within the limits of Christianity. Doubtless Newman does bring forward some special grounds of faith in Christianity; but they are such as are ordinarily contained in handbooks of Christian evidences, and stand in no organic connection with the more characteristic portions of his book. As respects credible proof of Roman Catholicism, we look in vain for the first installment. Certainly, no such installment is found in the assumption of an "illative sense"; for Newman admits (pp. 368, 369) that this operated in the estimate of the Bible current among Protestants in the sixteenth century, but yet in no trustworthy manner, as being based on mistaken elements of thought. What shall guarantee that its working in the minds

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<sup>40</sup>Ward, II, pp. 262, 263.

of Roman Catholics shall be any less fallible? Our apologist does not inform us, unless his representation that Roman Catholic populations have an apprehension of religious objects so vivid as closely to resemble actual sight,<sup>41</sup> is to be taken as affording the needed information. There is no adequate reason, however, for taking the given representation as in any wise fulfilling that function. It has in truth no apologetic significance. In the absence of a well-developed critical faculty, there is a certain tendency to visualize the objects which appeal strongly to feeling and imagination. So the forms of the fairy-world into which the child is inducted are often quite real to him. So the ghost-world is felt by many a pagan most intimately to environ his life. Among Protestant Christians also, as is clearly brought out in such a book as that of Professor James on the Varieties of Religious Experience, there has been a numerous company of pietists who have possessed the objects of religion in the "form of quasi-sensible realities." We cannot admit, therefore, that Newman has made here any valid point for Romanism. As remarked above, the whole treatise is singularly wanting in material

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<sup>41</sup>Grammar of Assent, p. 53. Compare Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching, 1850, pp. 236ff.



adapted to convince anyone of the truth of Roman Catholicism except the party already predisposed to be convinced.

An underlying skepticism, that is, in the philosophic order, has been charged against the Grammar of Assent. Newman, it is contended, shows a radical distrust of reason, and to save himself from the quicksands of unbelief feels obliged to cling to the platform of infallible authority. A judgment to this effect was rendered in very emphatic form by A. M. Fairbairn.<sup>42</sup> For ourselves, while admitting that there is some ground for this criticism, we are not inclined to give it much prominence. What strikes us is the essentially abortive character of the treatise so far as it was designed to be an apology for Roman Catholicism.

It would not be impertinent, did our space permit, to refer to the exemplification which Newman gave of the effect of taking characteristic Roman postulates into his mind. On this score he has furnished undesigned testimony against the system which it was his ruling ambition to champion. Let one topic suffice for illustration, namely, that of religious toleration. What should we expect of a man of his antecedents and native kindliness of

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<sup>42</sup>Catholicism, Roman and Anglican.



heart except an unequivocal advocacy of toleration and an outspoken reprobation of persecution for the cause of religion? We fail, however, to find anything of the sort in his writings. He has bowed his neck to ecclesiastical authority; and ecclesiastical authority, he seems to have felt, was on record in favor of religious persecution where it could be made practically effective for the Roman interest. In writing to Sir John Acton, in 1862, he noticed that Leo X reprobated Luther's declaration, "To burn heretics is contrary to the will of the Spirit;" also that Pius VI condemned the general denial of ecclesiastical punishments. He added: "I hold, till better instructed, that the church has a right to make laws and to enforce them with temporal punishments."<sup>43</sup> In 1884, in reply to an inquiry by Mark Pattison, he wrote: "On consideration I find it a duty to answer your question to me about toleration. I am obliged to say that what Catholics hold upon it, I hold with them."<sup>44</sup> His remark on the damnatory clause in the so-called Athanasian Creed is in no wise discordant with the gist of these deliverances.<sup>45</sup> The necessary conclusion is that Newman, whatever he might have favored in practice,

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<sup>43</sup>Ward, I, p. 640.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., II, p. 482.

<sup>45</sup>Grammar of Assent, p. 135.

accepted in principle the papal platform in favor of religious intolerance and persecution.

#### IV

It has been seen in the first part of this essay that Newman's style of apology met in his own day with no small measure of disparagement in Roman Catholic circles. More recently a very potent occasion for discrediting his work has been furnished by the Modernist movement, which Pius X anathematized as embracing the essence of all heresies. Doubtless in any fair judgment it must be admitted that Newman's position is in important particulars vastly distinguished from that of leading Modernists. He had no thought of seriously abridging the historical basis of the New Testament, or of reducing the formulated dogmas of the church to the plane of symbolical expressions into which a continually changing significance, corresponding with the demands of the age, can be imported. Nevertheless, he furnished antecedents to the Modernists, and they have not been backward in appealing to him as a forerunner. Especially have they claimed that the most fruitful conception in their scheme, the idea of doctrinal development, was derived from him as from no other. Referring to the effective working of this idea,

Tyrrell has testified: "The solidarity of Newmanism with Modernism cannot be denied. Newman might have shuddered at the progeny, but it is none the less his."<sup>46</sup> Again, a bond of association between Newman and the Modernists appears, as has been noticed, in the agreement of his conviction with theirs on the need of an enlarged function of the laity in the church; so that the pontifical reprobation of "laicism" in the encyclical *Pascendi gregis* unavoidably reflects back upon the great English convert. Once more, the scope which Newman assigned to the subjective factor in judging was capable of lending support to the Modernist exaltation of the feelings and intuitions springing out of the inner life, as against both metaphysical proofs and any forms of mere external attestation.<sup>47</sup>

In view of these points of association, it follows inevitably that official Romanism, as deeming it necessary to extirpate Modernism, root and branch, can regard Newman with very little complacency, and must wish to restrict the circle of his influence. Unless the trend of Roman administration is to undergo a marvelous reversal, the cloud which he

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<sup>46</sup>The Hibbert Journal, January, 1908.

<sup>47</sup>See the declaration of the Italian Modernists in the Programme of Modernism, 1908, pp. 98, 99.

thought had been lifted forever, with his advancement to the cardinalate, must continue to cast its shadow. The ampler measure of appreciation is likely to be exhibited in a province where a larger catholicity obtains than in the sphere of official Romanism. In the future, as in the past, broadminded Protestants will doubtless be disposed to apprise Newman at no mean figure on the score of his literary gift, his poetic sensibility, and his deep and constant religious aspiration. As respects his distinctively intellectual contributions to his age, their estimate will be quite humble. They will recognize that, while he had some points of superiority to the ordinary Roman dogmatist, he was too little acquainted with his age both on the philosophical and the critical side, and was too scantily endowed with penetrating insight into the conditions of great problems, to be qualified to exercise any large or permanent intellectual mastery.

ESSAY VIII

THE TRUTH AND THE ERROR OF  
MYSTICISM



## ESSAY VIII

### THE TRUTH AND THE ERROR OF MYSTICISM

THE title does not imply that mysticism is intrinsically a mixture of truth and error, but only that, as historically known, it gives occasion for the recognition of both elements or aspects. The proper suggestion is that this form of thought and feeling requires to be closely guarded in order to maintain a thoroughly normal character.

In respect of the compass which is to be assigned to the term "mysticism," it is scarcely feasible to appeal to a perfectly definite standard. Usage, however, gives a general sanction to certain limitations. Most writers on the theme do not regard it as any part of their task to dwell on all sorts of manifestations of a sense for the mystery pertaining to man's life and environment. They give no more than a passing reference to the crude magic which is native to uncultured tribes and which often persists in the face of advancing civilization; to the fanciful occultism which is careless of all rational proportion between means and ends and runs into swollen pretense; to the



arbitrary word-mysticism which ineptly assigns great potency to special collocations of letters and syllables. As compared with these schemes so-called theosophy is acknowledged to have a subject-matter that is proximate to that of mysticism. It is understood, however, that theosophy, generally speaking, is distinguished from mysticism in that it is largely given to dogmatic details of a cosmological order, and so tends to a relative subordination of the experiential element.

In order to indicate the sense which is more commonly assigned to the topic of mysticism we subjoin the following list of definitions:

"The word 'mysticism' expresses the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense, and living stage."

"Mysticism is the immediate feeling of the unity of the self with God, the endeavor to fix the immediateness of the life in God as such, abstracted from all intervening helps and channels whatsoever."

"The truly mystical may be summed up as simply a protest in favor of the whole man—the entire personality. It says that men can experience, and live, and feel, and do much

more than they can formulate, define, explain, or even fully express. Living is more than thinking."

"The mystic believes in a mystic organ, which enables the devout or elect person to grasp what the world cannot understand, a capacity of soul which begins where reason and reasonable grounds end."

"Mysticism is the assertion of an intuition which transcends the temporal categories of the understanding."

"Mysticism is the pretension to know God without intermediary, and, so to speak, face to face. For mysticism whatever is between God and us hides him from us."

"What the world calls mysticism is the science of ultimates, the science of self-evident reality, which cannot be reasoned about because it is the object of pure reason or perception."

"To be a mystic is simply to participate here and now in that real and eternal life, in the fullest, deepest sense which is possible to man."

"Whoever prays, not merely with the belief, but with the immediate sense that God is with him and hears, is to that extent a mystic and a mystic of the highest type."

"Mysticism claims to be able to know the

Unknowable, without help from dialectics, and is persuaded that by means of love and will it reaches a point to which thought unaided cannot attain."

"That we bear the image of God is the startingpoint, one might almost say the postulate, of all mysticism. The complete union of the soul with God is the goal of all mysticism."

"Religious mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature; or, more generally, as the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal and of the eternal in the temporal."<sup>1</sup>

Our own preference inclines to the following formula: Mysticism stands first of all for a very pronounced theory and faith relative to the possibilities of intercommunion between the soul and God; secondarily it stands for a very pronounced theory and faith respecting the significance of nature as the veil, robe, or symbolical expression of a transcendent reality.

## II

Since mysticism in its foremost association,

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<sup>1</sup> The citations are in order from the following: R. M. Jones, O. Pfeiderer, H. C. King, E. Lehmann, Lasson, Cousin, C. Patmore, Evelyn Underhill, J. B. Pratt, Récéjac, Overton, W. R. Inge.

as dealing with the heights and depths of the inner religious experience, is our principal theme, we make room for only a brief statement relative to nature mysticism; and that we proceed to give at once.

This order of mysticism finds expression in a twofold thesis. On the one hand, the truth is stressed that natural objects are symbols of spiritual realities; on the other hand, the thought is made prominent that nature is permeated with a divine presence. Charles Kingsley gave expression to the former thesis when he said, "The great mysticism is the belief, which is becoming every day stronger with me, that all symmetrical natural objects are types of some spiritual truth or existence." The same thesis is put in still more emphatic form in this sentence of R. L. Nettleship: "The true mysticism is the belief that everything, in being what it is, is symbolic of something more." As a graphic putting of a kindred proposition we may appropriately add these words of the Cambridge Platonist, John Smith: "God made the universe and all the creatures contained therein as so many glasses wherein he might reflect his own glory. He hath copied forth himself in the creation; and in this outward world we may read the lovely characters of the divine goodness, power, and wisdom."

The companion thesis of nature mysticism—or that on the pervasive presence of God in the world—has been given expression, either formal or virtual, in a large proportion of the instances where deep piety and poetic sensibility have combined their incentives.

So far as the Christian world is concerned, nature mysticism seems not to have been very largely represented before the modern period, or at least before the era of the Renaissance. Among the church Fathers Gregory of Nyssa is instanced as paying a measure of deference to this type of thought in his conception of the visible world as the garment and drapery of God. But neither with the Fathers nor the Scholastics do we find this point of view made prominent. First in the sixteenth century we note the beginning of a succession of writers who paid large deference to nature mysticism. To this category belong Agrippa of Nettesheim (1487–1535), Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493–1541), Valentine Weigel (1533–1588), and Angelus Silesius (1624–1677). Excelling all of these in scope of influence was the shoemaker of Görlitz, Jacob Boehme (1575–1624). A prominent feature in his system was the doctrine of antitheses. “In Yes and No,” he said, “all things consist”; and this point of view he did not hesitate to apply to God himself,

assuming that in him, as the other or counterpart of Spirit, a nature eternally subsists. With the *antitheses* of Boehme one will wish to compare the elaborate scheme of *correspondences* which was set forth by Swedenborg (1688-1772) in his mystical interpretation of the universe. Something of the same fertility and boldness in construction which were characteristic of Boehme and Swedenborg were shown by one who had the advantage of acquaintance with their writings, though not a close disciple of either, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803). Other names might be added to the present catalogue, and not with the least right that of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854). Both in the second and the third stages of his philosophical development there was a strong infusion of nature mysticism in his thinking.

As has been indicated, poetic sensibility affords a congenial ground for nature mysticism. This was marvelously illustrated by Francis of Assisi, and it is no meager illustration which has been furnished by our modern poets. The words could be applied to a number of them which have been used to characterize the viewpoint of Wordsworth: "He apprehended all things natural or human, as an expression of something which, while mani-



fested in them, immeasurably transcended them.”

### III

Mysticism, in its most prominent and significant aspect, as respecting the inner life, has been represented to a very noticeable degree in the non-Christian world. Indeed, some of the cardinal examples of it in this domain have wrought effectively to supply terms and ideas to men who have figured prominently in the history of Christian mysticism. It will not be amiss, therefore, to include among our preliminary observations a few words on non-Christian illustrations of the theme in hand.

In India both before and since the dawning of the Christian era there has been a great efflorescence of mysticism. It was a marked constituent of the Brahmanism which taught that Brahman, the indefinable Absolute, is the only real entity, and that the proper goal of the human spirit is to recognize its identity with Brahman and to be wholly absorbed in him. Buddhism pictured the goal in quite different terms, but nevertheless in a way which overreached plain understanding and ran into a mystical range; for, whatever meaning Gautama may have assigned to *Nirvana*—



the word expressive of the ideal destiny—his followers soon began, at least in large part, to construe it as denoting a state mysterious, transcendent, and not properly describable. As for modern Hinduism, besides the inheritance which it received from the older Brahmanism, as expressed in the Upanishads, it gives a certain scope to a mystical element in its strong emphasis on close union, by means of faith, love, and devotion, with a chosen deity.

China is not a field where we should be inclined to look for mystics, and, in fact, it has not been comparable to India as respects this order of religious products. Still, we find here a full-blown mystic in Lao-tse, an older contemporary of Confucius, a deep-hearted pietist, who gave expression to an emphatic type of idealistic and quietistic mysticism, and has the honor of having inculcated the high ethical maxim which enjoins the returning of good for evil.

The spirit of the Greeks with its predilection for the concrete, for objects sufficiently defined by form and color to serve a dramatic purpose, would not seem likely to afford much hospitality to mysticism. And in truth, if we were to take Homer as representing the Greek religion, we should be compelled to say that it harbored the mystical element to a very

scanty degree. But Homer is no spokesman for the whole of Greek thought and feeling. A mystical element came in with the Dionysiac cult, and, being joined with somewhat of a speculative bent in the Orphic sect, passed on to a stage more capable of appealing to thoughtful people. Plato was not above taking account of the Orphists. In some respects, undoubtedly, he seems rather plainly contrasted with the typical mystic. He greatly emphasized the rightful supremacy of reason, the need of deferring to rational canons in all mental proceedings. He also gave such definiteness of character to souls as is opposed to the notion of their being fused into any higher entity. But, on the other hand, in his doctrine of ideas he laid a basis for the inference that the highest in rank is the most general, and so encouraged a habit of construing God, or the Absolute, as beyond all specification of qualities, above all namable attributes. Plato himself put forth no such agnostic formula; but in Neo-Platonism it came to emphatic expression. Plotinus, the most distinguished representative of this philosophy, writing in the third century, used the most unqualified terms in describing the transcendence of God, and also taught that the soul, in attaining unto the vision of this transcendent

Deity, must be lifted above all definable states and operations. These were viewpoints of far-reaching significance; for they came through the medium of Proclus, a follower of Plotinus, into the possession of a Christian writer of the sixth century, the so-called Dionysius, the Areopagite; and through him they were passed on and gave a tinge to a broad stream of Christian mysticism.

Neo-Platonic mysticism was also fruitful within the Mohammedan domain. The principal representatives here were the Persian poets of the tenth and the following centuries, commonly referred to as the Sufi poets. As Mohammedans they had, of course, a very equivocal authority for the mystical trend in their effusions, since the Koran, in its dominant tone, stresses God's external sovereignty, and is more inclined to anthropomorphism than to mysticism. But they were not sticklers for authority. One of the greatest of them, Jalaluddin Rumi, said of his own practice:

"I extracted the marrow of the Koran  
And flung the bone to the dogs."

Eclectic and latitudinarian in temper, the Sufis were quite free to borrow whatever was congenial to their poetic and idealistic bent. Possibly they may have derived something from

Hindu speculations. It is presumed, however, that the larger incentive came from Neo-Platonism.

The affinity of these non-Christian forms of mysticism with pantheism is for the most part a very pronounced feature. The Brahmanical form was prodigal of formulas thoroughly pantheistic in essence. The Plotinian teaching, if not chargeable with being a downright pantheism, was at no great remove from the same in some of its representations. The Sufi poets, the Mohammedan heirs of the Plotinian doctrines, are commonly classed as pantheists. How was it with the Christian heirs of the same doctrines? That some of them were free to use forms of expression ill-guarded against pantheistic implications is quite undeniable. How far the real thinking of any of them was affected by the pantheistic leaven remains for judicial inquiry.

#### IV

In enumerating grounds of appreciation of mysticism, more especially as developed within Christian bounds, it will not be impertinent to refer to the sanction contained in biblical precedent. If we take the term in the sense which has been characterized as according with its foremost association, it cannot well be

denied that it stands for something pretty liberally represented in the Bible. The Old Testament as a whole, it is true, exhibits no very distinct affinity for the mystical standpoint. There runs through it a rather sharp antithesis between God and man. While place is given to a noble conception of ethical fellowship between Jehovah and his obedient servants, the more emphatic view of the interior union of the human soul with the divine source of its life is infrequently brought to view. A function is accredited to vision or trance, but the peculiar experience is made instrumental to some specific divine communication rather than counted a means of transcendental union of its subject with God. First when Judaism came into contact with Greek speculation was a noticeable bent developed in the direction of mysticism.

In the New Testament religion, on the other hand, a considerable zone of the distinctive mystical teaching is apparent. The Johannine type clearly falls within that zone. Its affinity with mysticism is manifested in its doctrine of the Logos who is the light and the life of men; in its portrayal of a life union with the Redeemer under the figure of the vine and the branches; in its declaration about the Father and the Son coming to the believer

and taking up their abode with him; in its description of the Comforter as an abiding guest and source of spiritual illumination; in its readiness to discover in the forms of nature symbols of spiritual truths; and finally in its tendency to transcend the standpoint of temporal succession and to view the eternal order as here and now exemplified in the true life. Indeed, there is very fair warrant for accepting this declaration: "The Gospel of St. John is the charter of Christian mysticism."

The Johannine writings, however, are far from comprising the whole field of mysticism in the New Testament. Paul in his way was unquestionably as much of a mystic as was John. In fact, one and another writer has been willing to contend that, while John was specially affluent in phraseology adapted to the uses of mystics, in his fundamental thinking he was really less of a mystic than was the apostle to the Gentiles. The latter, it can be said with confidence, gave no less scope than did the former to the thought of the divine immanence. In his conception of the relation of Christ to the believer he offered a full equivalent for the Johannine Logos who was represented as the life and the light of men. A precedent for the emphatic language of mysticism on the union of the human with the



divine can be found in various Pauline utterances, and notably in this strong testimony in the Epistle to the Galatians: "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."

## V

A second ground of favorable judgment of mysticism is found in the vocation which it has fulfilled in providing an offset to the sacerdotal and ceremonial type of religion. In virtue of its animating spirit and cardinal points of view, it has been well fitted to fulfill an office of this kind. Placing the maximum stress upon the inner life, and magnifying the privilege of the believer to enter into immediate communion with God by the pathway of spiritual contemplation, it logically has tended to relegate priestly offices and ceremonial to a secondary rank. Doubtless instances can be pointed out where the intense and idealizing temper of the mystic has wrought to give an exaggerated meaning and value to ecclesiastical offices and sacramental performances. In other instances, it must equally be admitted, it has carried the disparagement of visible means to an unhealthy extreme. But, taken in the aggregate, in spite of sundry aberrations, it can be credited with a useful office in opposing the externalization of religion and



in checkmating an idolatrous estimate of ecclesiastical mechanism. The candid student of history cannot fail to recognize in the broad current of mysticism, which was started in the thirteenth century and which ran on near to the close of the fifteenth, a preparation for the Protestant Reformation. It is a matter of history that Luther was an appreciative student of the *Theologia Germanica* and of the writings of Tauler. It is also on record that he said, with pardonable extravagance, respecting the practical mystic John Wessel, that all his own doctrines might seem to have been taken from this fifteenth-century predecessor.

## VI

It remains to mention a further ground for a favorable estimate of mysticism—and one not second to any—namely, the great treasure which its representatives have contributed to religious literature. In the line of rich spiritual maxims, teachings adapted to awaken and to satisfy the deepest aspirations of the human spirit, the mystics have placed all friends of earnest piety under profound obligation. Nowhere outside of the Bible will one find more quickening suggestions of the heights and depths of religious privilege and experience than in their writings. The compiler of a handbook

of the best spiritual maxims would be compelled to draw largely from their sayings. We cannot, we are convinced, more fitly utilize our space than by citing specimen sentences from a considerable list of mystical writers.

Augustine (354-430), as the most comprehensive personality among the church Fathers, was unquestionably much more than a mystic. It is also true that he did not assert the most emphatic thesis on possible union with God that can be found in Christian literature. Still, a mystical piety was no slight constituent in his inner life. Something of the trend of his thought and feeling may be gathered from the following utterances: "Thou hast formed us, O God, for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee." "He loves thee too little who loves aught with thee, which he loves not for thee, O love, who ever burnest, and art never quenched." "The evangelist who presents Christ to us in a far loftier strain of teaching than all the others is also the one in whose narrative the Lord washes the disciples' feet. . . . Christ the Lord is a low gateway; he who enters by this gateway must humble himself, that he may be able to enter with head unharmed."

Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), while the advocate of a high range of mystical con-

templation and experience, was also gifted with no scanty measure of practical spiritual wisdom and poetic sensibility. Let the following sentences testify: "Like the sisters Martha and Mary, labor and meditation should dwell together. When one falls from the light of meditation, he guards against sinking into the darkness of sin and the torpor of idleness by abiding in the light of good works." "Grief over sin is necessary if it be not constant; it must be broken by the more joyful remembrance of the divine goodness, lest the heart grow hardened through sadness, and from despair perish more exceedingly." "Trust to one who has had experience. You will find something far greater in the woods than you will in books. Stones and trees will teach you that which you will never learn from masters. Think you not you can suck honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock? Do not the mountains drop sweetness? the hills run with milk and honey, and the valleys stand thick with corn?"

From Eckhart (1260-1329), though specially distinguished for his bold elaboration of the speculative side of mysticism, we have some golden sentences in the practical order. Thus he says: "What a man has taken in by contemplation he pours out in love." "It is better

to feed the hungry than to see even such visions as St. Paul saw." "You need not go into a desert and fast; a crowd is often more lonely than a wilderness, and small things harder to do than great." "We should not think so much of what we do as of what we are. If we be good and wise, our works also will be well and wisely done. Thy deeds do not sanctify thee, but thou must sanctify thy deeds." "That a man has a restful and peaceful life in God is good. That a man endures a painful life in patience, that is better; but that a man has his rest in the midst of a painful life, that is best of all." "As little as the bright eye can endure aught that is foreign to it, so little can the pure soul bear anything in it, any stain on it that comes between it and God."

John Tauler (1300-1361), as he was one of the greatest preachers of his age, was especially prolific in strong practical maxims. The following may serve as specimens: "He who is too full of his own joys or sorrows to get beyond himself can never come to know himself." "God takes a thousand times more pains with us than the artist with his picture, by many touches of sorrow and many colors of circumstance, to bring man into the form that is the highest and noblest in his sight." "A

thousand offenses which a man truly acknowledges and confesses himself to be guilty of are not so perilous as a single offense which thou wilt not recognize nor allow thyself to be convinced of." "He who seeks God, if he seeks anything beside God, will not find him." "There is no work so small, no art so mean, but it all comes from God and is a special gift of his. Thus let each do what another cannot do so well, and for love, returning gift for gift." "Our Lord did not rebuke Martha on account of her works, for they were holy and good; he reproved her on account of her anxiety."

From the unknown author of the *Theologia Germanica*, who is supposed to have written in the fourteenth century, we have these sayings: "Knowledge and light profit nothing without love." "A true lover of God loveth him alike in having or in not having, in sweetness or in bitterness, in good report or in evil report. And therefore he standeth alike unshaken in all things, and at all seasons." "It has been said that there is of nothing so much in hell as of self-will. The which is true; for there is nothing else there than self-will; and if there were no self-will, there would be no devil and no hell." With this declaration may be compared the statement of the English mystic

Juliana of Norwich: "To me was showed no harder hell than sin."

Ruysbroeck (1293-1381), one of the very foremost of the representatives of mysticism in the Netherlands, furnishes us with these worthy sayings: "It seems to me that to bathe oneself in humility is to bathe oneself in God, for God is the source of humility." "He who refers all things to the glory of God enjoys God in all things, and he sees in them the image of God." "We find nowadays many silly men who would be so interior and detached that they will not be active and helpful in any way in which their neighbors are in need. Know such men are neither hidden friends nor yet true servants of God, but are wholly false and disloyal; for none can follow his counsels but those who obey his laws."

The English mystic Walter Hilton, who died in 1395, presents in his *Scale of Perfection* an amiable type of piety. That he was not wanting in evangelical sentiment appears from the following sentences: "He that will serve God wisely and come to the perfect love of God, he will covet to have no other reward but him only. But then to have him may no creature deserve by his own travail or industry; for though a man could labor corporally and spiritually as much as could all



the creatures that have ever been, yet could he not, for all that, only by his own working deserve to have God for his reward; for he is the sovereign bliss and endless goodness, and surpasseth without comparison all men's deserts." "The lover of Jesus is his friend, not for that he deserveth it, but because Jesus of his merciful goodness maketh him his friend by true accord. And therefore to him he sheweth his secrets, as to a true friend that pleaseth him by love, not serveth him through fear in slavery."

The *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, (1380-1471) may be criticized as containing more of a monastic coloring than belongs to the truest ideal, but no criticism can count for much in the face of the wide ministry which the book has fulfilled. "The eternal thing in it," as has been well said, "is its calm and compelling revelation of the reality of the spiritual kingdom, and its complete sufficiency for the soul." We cite very briefly as follows: "Acquisition and increase of goods cannot help thee to peace. Neither can change of place avail. Thou mayest change thy situation, but thou canst not get away from the real evil which is thy own selfish will." "Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing loftier, nothing broader, nothing pleasanter,



nothing fuller or better in heaven or in earth; for love is born of God and cannot rest save in God from whom it is derived."

Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), whose public activity was on the same remarkable scale as her repute for sanctity, gave evidence of her religious insight by such sentences as these: "Whoso possesses true spiritual love must judge and take all things according to the will of God, and not according to that of men; and when he remains deprived of any spiritual consolation, he must at once think and say: This befalls me through the divine disposition, by the permission of God, who, in all the adversities he sends me, seeks and wills naught save my justification and salvation. And with this thought all bitter things will be rendered sweet." "No operation of the soul that fears with servile fear is perfect. . . . This fear proceeds from the blindness of self-love; for as soon as the rational creature loves itself with sensitive self-love, it straightway fears. And this is the cause for which it fears: it has set its love and hope upon a weak thing, that has no firmness in itself, nor any stability, but passes like the wind."

From Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) we have these ardent sayings: "Man can truly know by continual experience that the love

of God is our repose, our joy, and our life; and that self-love is but constant weariness, sadness, and a death of our true selves both in this world and in the next." "As the intellect reaches higher than speech, so does love reach higher than intellect."

The Spanish mystic Teresa (1515-1582), though specially famed for her visions, was not lacking in sense for the practical side of religion, as is evidenced by these maxims: "Love consists not in having greater delights, but greater resolutions and desires of pleasing God in everything, and in endeavoring as much as possible not to offend him." "Be assured that the further you advance in the love of the neighbor, the more will you advance in the love of God likewise." "The love of God consists not in having the gift of tears, nor in receiving consolations and tenderness of devotion (which we may, however, desire and take comfort in); but in serving him with justice, fortitude, and humility; otherwise, it seems to me we should be receiving everything and giving nothing."

Another Spanish mystic of the sixteenth century, John of the Cross (1542-1591), calls for an appreciative reference. The extent to which he demands the suppression of the natural life is indeed repellent, but his un-

sparing self-devotement elicits respect, and some of his instructions are worthy of record. Thus he says: "The soul whose will is divided among trifles is like water which never rises, because it has an outlet below, and is therefore profitless." "If charity admits of envy at all, it is a holy envy that makes us grieve that we have not the virtues others have; but still rejoicing that they have them, and glad that others outstrip us in the race, we being so full of imperfections ourselves." "One good work or act of the will, wrought in charity, is more precious in the eyes of God than that which all the visions and revelations of heaven might effect. Many souls to whom visions have never come are incomparably more advanced in the way of perfection than others to whom many have been given."

Reference has been made to Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) in the sketch of nature mysticism. We add here this single extract: "Like as the various flowers stand in the ground and grow side by side, not upbraiding one another about color, scent, or taste, but letting earth and sun, rain and wind, heat and cold, do what they like with them, all simply growing each according to his own disposition—so is it also with the children of God."

Francis de Sales (1567-1622), if he did not

often strike the deeper notes so greatly valued by the more hardy mystics, gave many devout advices which have earned the appreciation of a wide circle. "God requires," he says, "a faithful fulfillment of the merest trifle given us to do, rather than the most ardent aspirations for things to which we are not called." "To wish to play the ecstatic is an abuse. When we see a person who in prayer has ravishments by which he goes out from and mounts above himself in God, and yet has no ecstasies in life, that is, leads not a life lifted up and united to God by abnegation of worldly concupiscence, and mortification of natural will and inclination, by an interior meekness, simplicity, humility, and above all by a continual charity—then we may believe that all these ravishments are very doubtful and perilous; they are ravishments proper to make men wonder, but not to sanctify them."

Molinos (1640–1697) taught a quietistic order of mysticism, which, however, was far from earning the sentence to life-long imprisonment which was visited upon him in 1687. The following are typical sayings: "Wouldst thou that the omnipotent King should enter into thy soul, thou must see to it that thy heart be pure, innocent, quiet, and free, unoccupied and empty, silent and meek."

"It concerns thee only to prepare thy heart like clean paper, whereon the Divine Wisdom may imprint characters to his own liking."

"The Lord reposes only where quiet reigns and self-love is banished."

Fénelon (1651-1715), a distinguished figure in the galaxy which adorned the age of Louis XIV, supplies us with a full treasury of choice sentiments. We make the following scanty selection: "Thou lovest like an infinite God when thou lovest; thou movest heaven and earth to save thy loved ones; thou becomest man, a babe, the vilest of men, covered with reproaches, dying with infamy, and under the pangs of the cross; all this is not too much for an infinite love." "This is the whole of religion—to get out of self and self-love in order to get into God." "Never should we so abandon ourselves to God as when he seems to abandon us. Let us enjoy light and consolation when it is his pleasure to give them to us, but let us not attach ourselves to his gifts, but to him; and when he plunges us into the night of *pure faith*, let us still press on through the agonizing darkness." "The fervor of devotion does not depend upon yourself; all that lies in your power is the direction of your will."

Madame Guyon (1648-1717) presents us

with less variety of spiritual maxims than that supplied by Fénelon, but is represented by not a few sayings expressive of a deep strain of piety. "A direct struggle," she says, "with distractions and temptations rather serves to augment them, and withdraws the soul from that adherence to God which should ever be its sole occupation. We should simply turn away from the evil, and draw yet nearer to God." "The soul ascends to God by giving up self to the destroying and annihilating power of divine love." "The same things which would be profitable when God, by his Spirit, draws them, become quite otherwise when of ourselves we enter into them. This appears to me so clear, that I prefer being a whole day with the worst in obedience to God, before living an hour with the best, only from choice and human inclination."

A school which flourished in England during the period of the eminent French mystics from whom we have just cited is known as the Cambridge Platonists. This school, though not as a whole representative of a radical type of mysticism, may be credited with a rather positive affiliation with the mystical standpoint. Among its members were John Smith (1618-1652), Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683), and Henry More (1614-1687). The first named



exhibited a specially fine genius for a cogent expression of the deeper spiritual truths. We may judge of the combination of balance with elevation in his thinking from such sentences as these: "Good men are content and ready to deny themselves for God. I mean, not that they should deny their own reason, as some would have it, for that were to deny a beam of divine light, and so to deny God, instead of denying ourselves for him." "The soul itself hath its sense, as well as the body; and therefore David when he would teach us how to know what the divine goodness is, calls not for speculation but sensation, 'Taste and see how good the Lord is.' " "True religion never finds itself out of the infinite sphere of the Divinity; and wherever it finds beauty, harmony, goodness, love, ingenuity, holiness, justice, and the like, it is ready to say, 'Here and there is God'; wheresoever any such perfections shine out, a holy mind climbs up by these sunbeams and raises itself up to God."

William Law (1686-1761) appears as a rather pronounced mystic in one class of his writings. In his rating of the office of reason he took a less eligible position than that represented by John Smith; but otherwise he much resembled the Cambridge Platonists in the tone of his discourse. As illustrative passages



we choose these: "A soul may be as fully fixed in selfishness through a fondness of sensible enjoyments in spiritual things, as by a fondness for earthly satisfactions. . . . These inward delights are not holiness, they are not piety, they are not perfection, but they are God's gracious allurements and calls to seek after holiness and perfection." "Would you know the blessing of all blessings, it is this love of God dwelling in your soul, and killing every root of bitterness, which is the pain and torment of earthly selfish love. For all wants are satisfied, all disorders of nature are removed, no life is any longer a burden, every day is a day of peace, everything you meet becomes a help to you, because everything you see and do is all done in the sweet gentle element of love."

The name of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) is apt to suggest the keen and relentless dialectician and dogmatist. But another association is appropriate, since he both set a high value on the religious affections, and personally was not wholly a stranger to mystical experiences. We find him remarking: "It is evident that religion consists so much in holy affections as that without holy affection in the heart there is no true religion. No light in the understanding is good which does not produce holy

affection in the heart; no habit or principle in the heart is good which has no such exercise; and no external fruit is good which does not proceed from such exercises." "The sweetest joys and delights I have experienced have not been those that have arisen from a hope of my own good estate, but in a direct view of the glorious things of the gospel. When I enjoy this sweetness it seems to carry me above thoughts of my own estate." "The beauties of nature are really emanations or shadows of the excellency of the Son of God. So that, when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes of wind, we may consider that we see only the emanations of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see his love and purity. So the green trees and fields and singing of birds are the emanations of his infinite joy and benignity. The easiness and naturalness of trees and vines are shadows of his beauty and loveliness. The crystal rivers and murmuring streams are the footsteps of his favor, grace, and beauty. When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous bow, we behold the adumbrations of his glory and goodness; and in the blue sky, of his mildness and gentleness."

On some accounts it would seem to be a misadventure to give John Wesley (1703-1791) any place among mystics. According to his own confession he felt, indeed, an attraction toward them, at an early period in his career; but also according to his own conviction he was happily saved from this perilous leaning, and we find him in his maturer years passing some emphatic criticisms on prominent exponents of mysticism. It is to be noticed, furthermore, that the enormous burden of practical activity which was upon him, in founding and administering his societies, limited his opportunities both for cultivating the contemplative life and for bringing its viewpoints to fine and carefully considered expression. Still, he cherished very ardent beliefs as to the possibilities of illumination, transformation, and enrichment of human souls by the indwelling Spirit of God. In this sense an affiliation with mysticism can be credited to him. We choose for citation brief passages illustrative of three points—the intuitive principle to be recognized in faith, the office to be accorded to reason alongside this principle, and the primacy of love. “Faith,” he writes, “is that divine evidence whereby the spiritual man discerneth God and the things of God. It is with regard to the spiritual world what

sense is with regard to the natural. It is the spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God." "We not only allow, but earnestly exhort all who seek after true religion to use all the reason which God has given them in searching out the things of God. . . . God moves man, whom he has made a reasonable creature, according to the reason which he has given him. He moves him by his understanding, as well as by his affections, by light as well as by heat. He moves him to do this or that by conviction full as often as by desire." "This love [of God and the neighbor] we believe to be the medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand. There is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering, the whole image of God, and at the same time a peace that passeth all understanding, a joy unspeakable and full of glory."

John G. Fichte (1762-1814), however closely associated with subtle philosophical speculation, is rightly mentioned in connection with mysticism. Not only did he express his appreciation of the Johannine type by formal statement but also by his profound emphasis on the idea of eternal life as begun in the present.

"I am connected," he says, "with the Infinite One, and there is nothing real, lasting, imperishable in me, but the voice of conscience and my free obedience to it. By the first the spiritual world bows down to me and embraces me as one of its members; by the second I raise myself into it; and the infinite Will unites me with it, and is the source of it and me. . . . I am immortal, imperishable, eternal, as soon as I form the resolution to obey the laws of eternal reason: I am not merely destined to become so. . . . What we call heaven does not lie only on the other side of the grave; it is diffused over nature here, and its light dawns on every pure heart." "Wouldst thou behold God face to face, as he is in himself? Seek him not beyond the skies; thou canst find him wherever thou art. Behold the life of his devoted ones, and thou beholdest him; resign thyself to him, and thou wilt find him within thine own breast."

It would not be difficult to name respects in which Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was quite remote from the typical mystic. But there is no denying that a mystical phase bulks large in his writings. Equally it is impossible to deny that this in some of its expressions has a distinctly pantheistic cast. However, no mean compensation is supplied

in the mighty stress which he awards, whether with full consistency or not, to the ethical interest. Illustration is afforded in such sentences as these: "We lie open on one side to the deeps of the spiritual nature, to the attributes of God. Justice we see and know, Love, Freedom, Power. These natures no man ever got above, but they tower over us, and most in the moment when our interests tempt us to wound them." "We are made of the moral sentiment, the world is built by it, things endure as they share it, all beauty, all intelligence, all health exist by it." "Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of nature. In so far as he roves from these ends he bereaves himself of power or auxiliaries; his being shrinks out of all remote channels, he becomes less and less, a mote, a point, until absolute badness is absolute death."

## VII

The above exposition affords, we are confident, a clear demonstration that it is no meager showing which can be made for the favorable side of mysticism. But, on the other hand, it is in evidence that certain tendencies adverse to the best religious ideal are liable to attach themselves to mysticism



These tendencies may not belong to mysticism as such. It may, therefore, be illegitimate to use them without large qualifications as a ground for estimating this type of religious thought and experience. Nevertheless, mysticism, as known to us in history, has so often given exhibition of the tendencies in question that it is only reasonable to conclude that it is characterized by a certain liability to them. So matter is provided for a picture of mysticism on the adverse side.

And here there is occasion to mention first of all the extreme emphasis on the divine transcendence which has so often come to expression. On the part of Christian mystics this seems to have been very largely an inheritance from Neo-Platonism. Plotinus, as has already been observed, went to the limit on this theme. He placed ultimate being above all categories. "There is no name for it because nothing can be asserted of it. . . . We can say what it is not, but we cannot say what it is. . . . God is something which is not essence, but beyond essence." The pseudo Dionysius reproduced without abridgment the agnostic phrases of Plotinus, referring to God as superessential indetermination, superrational unity, superessential essence, above all existence. "He is neither darkness nor light nor truth nor



error; He can neither be affirmed nor denied; nay, though we may affirm or deny the things that are beneath him, we can neither affirm nor deny him; for the perfect and sole cause of all is above all affirmation, and that which transcends all is above all subtraction, absolutely separate and beyond all that is." Language quite parallel to that of Dionysius was employed by Erigena in stressing the divine transcendence. The more noted mystics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were quite free to use equivalent terms. Eckhart, Tauler, the author of the *Theologia Germanica*, and Ruysbroeck roundly affirmed the inapplicability to God of any known categories or attributes. Discriminating between the Godhead and God as expressed in the Trinity, they assimilate the former to a distinctionless void. Thus we read in the *Theologia Germanica*: "To God as Godhead appertains neither will, nor knowledge, nor manifestation, nor anything that we can name, or say, or conceive"; and Ruysbroeck says in substance: "Beyond and above this plane of divine differentiation [in the Trinity] is the superessential world, transcending all conditions, inaccessible to thought—the measureless solitude of the Godhead."

What better can such theories be called than aberrations distinctly foreign to sound thinking

and true religion? They involve the melancholy conclusion that revelation does not reveal; in other words, that there is and can be no true revelation of God. They carry the inference that greatness is to be measured by indefiniteness, so that the greatest in the rank of being must be analogous to empty space or to the formless matter named in antique philosophy. They imply that the impersonal is more basal and wealthy than the personal—a warped and unfounded assumption, as was noted in the essay on pantheistic theories. As respects the distinction between the Godhead and God we only stop to note that, taken in the sense of the writers cited, it is quite foreign to Scripture as well as gratuitous in philosophical thinking. In the point of view of the biblical revelation the Father is absolutely ultimate. The Persons of the Trinity are not manifestations of something back of the three Persons. Rather the Son and the Spirit manifest the nature and purposes of the infinite Father.

### VIII

A second error, attaching in no slight measure to mysticism as historically known, may be regarded as a corollary to the foregoing. God having been construed as the indefinite, the

inference was drawn that the soul, in order to reach him, must proceed by the *via negativa*, must be stripped of all characteristic features and functions, and so be assimilated to the undifferentiated divine essence.

This point of view was expressed in the most emphatic terms by a number of writers. Thus the pseudo Dionysius remarks, "When we enter that darkness which is above understanding, we pass not merely into brevity of speech, but even into absolute silence and the negation of thought." Eckhart declares of the subject of close approach to God: "He must come into a forgetting and not knowing. One cannot draw near to this Word better than by stillness and silence; then it is heard and understood in utter ignorance. When one knows nothing it is opened and revealed." Tauler teaches: "If man in reality is to become one with God, then all energies and powers even of the inner man must die and become silent. The will must turn away even from the good and from all willing and become void of willing." "In this higher state," observes Ruysbroeck, "the soul sinks into the vast darkness of the Godhead, into the abyss, in which the Persons of the Trinity transcend themselves." "There is no sense of anything in this state," says Teresa, "only fruition with-

out understanding what that may be the fruition of which is granted."

So run the descriptions of the consummating stage, of the highest flight of the soul in its ascent toward the goal. In judging them it may be admitted that one attempting, out of the resources of an imperfect recollection, to sketch the impressions received in trance-like experiences, might naturally be inclined to employ such terms as are cited above. But the estimate put upon this order of experiences invites a downright challenge. Man is not perfected by being, so to speak, depersonalized; not glorified by being plunged into an abyss of darkness and ignorance. It is an eclipse of both God and man which occurs when God is represented as the absolutely indefinite, and man in order to union with him is reduced to a corresponding indefiniteness and vacuity.

## IX

Closely linked with the foregoing error, and coextensive with it as respects the field in which it has currency, was a habit of depicting union with God in essentially pantheistic terms. Whatever may have been the meaning put into the terms, there can be no denial that the terms employed were supremely

adapted to suggest a pantheistic dissipation of the distinctions between God and man. The following extracts will afford sufficient evidence. "The heavenly Father," asserts Eckhart, "begetteth his only begotten Son in himself and in me. Wherefore in himself and in me? I am one with him; and he has no power to shut me out." Referring to the *spark*, which he represents as central to man's personality, he affirms, "This is in very deed God, in that it is a single oneness and bears within it the imagery of all creatures." He remarks further, "The eye through which I see God, that is the same eye with which God sees me." Following the example of Eckhart, Tauler speaks of God as begetting his Son in the soul "as truly as he begetteth him in eternity, neither more nor less." Again he says: "God touches the brimming vessel [of the soul] with his finger, and it overflows, and pours itself back again into the divine source from whence it has proceeded. It flows back into its source without channel and means and loses itself altogether; will, knowledge, love, perception are all swallowed up and lost in God, and become one with him." Suso, a contemporary of Tauler, uses this strong language: "Like a being which loses itself in an indescribable intoxication, the [human] spirit ceases to be

itself, divests itself of itself, passes into God, and becomes entirely one with him as a drop of water is mingled with a cask of wine." Ruysbroeck puts the thought of union with God in this form: "All men who are exalted above their creatureliness into a contemplative life are one with the divine glory—yea, are that glory. And they see and feel and find in themselves by means of this divine light that they are the same simple Ground as to their uncreated nature." With Angelus Silesius we find the thesis on union with God expressed in these paradoxical terms: "I am as rich as God; there can be no grain of dust that I have not in common with him.... I know that without me God can no moment live; if I come to naught, he must needs give up the ghost."

It is only fair to add that, judged by their intention, these writers, for the most part, were not so thoroughly inclined to a pantheistic abolition of the distinction between the divine and the human as their forms of expression might suggest. Eckhart, Tauler, and Ruysbroeck took pains to indicate their belief in the persistence of the human subject as opposed to complete absorption in God. The fact remains, however, that their phraseology was seriously at fault, and that its ill-chosen



terms were more or less of an index of defective thinking. Whatever precedent for the phraseology may be found in certain imprudent statements of the Christian Fathers, it stands in glaring contradiction with the consciousness of creaturely dependence and limitation which must be an abiding constituent of normal piety. Naturally it furnished a congenial basis for such pantheistic aberrations as found harborage in the later Middle Ages within the Sect of the Free Spirit and other similar parties. From Christian and non-Christian history alike we are obliged to infer that radical mysticism is exposed to temptation in the direction of pantheism.

## X

Once more, we find occasion to charge against mysticism, as it stands before us in history, a rather conspicuous tendency to schematize religious experience overmuch; in other words, to prescribe a fixed succession of stages for reaching the goal of perfect union with God. This may not have resulted from the proper genius of mysticism so much as from carrying over a scholastic habit into the mystical province. Not all mystics by any means are chargeable with the fault in question, but a considerable proportion of them have exhibited it to a noticeable extent. Either



giving too loose a rein to speculative requirements, or inadvertently turning the experience of an individual into a general model, they have specified from three to six distinct stages as marking the ascending pathway to the summit of the contemplative life. A specimen of this intemperate elaboration is furnished by Richard of St. Victor. The first stage of contemplation, as he represents, is directed to nature, as a field from which one may derive a spontaneous impression of divine power, wisdom, and goodness. In the second, the mind passes beyond this spontaneous impression, and inquires after the order, cause, and use of visible things. In the third, the similitude between the visible and the invisible is made an occasion of the thought being uplifted to the latter. In the fourth stage the images of visible things are wholly transcended, and incorporeal entities, such as one's own soul or such as spirits and angels, are apprehended. In the fifth stage there is a vision of the divine, which may be described as above reason, but not contrary to reason. In the sixth stage contemplation is apparently counter to reason (*praeter rationem*) as well as above reason. Here the soul is confronted with mysteries transcending all the powers of rational insight. Such is the mystery of the

Holy Trinity. In the first four of these stages human industry has a part to perform along with divine agency. But in the last two all depends upon the grace of God. One may prepare himself for them by the exercises of self-discipline and piety; he attains to them only as he is transported by the might of that same Spirit which caught up Paul to the third heaven. In such an experience the mind is lost both to the world and itself in ecstasy.

Bonaventura presents a scheme substantially identical with that of Richard. Teresa distinguishes four degrees of prayer and of exaltation in prayer. In the first the faculties are exercised in ordinary ways. In the second, the prayer of quiet, the divine factor, comes in so largely that the understanding is exercised only at intervals. In the third, the prayer of union, the soul is so engulfed in the divine as to be in a sense out of itself. In the fourth, the prayer of rapture, the soul is fully possessed by God, and filled with an unspeakable delight and impression of glory. Others of the mystics have constructed ladders of spiritual ascent equally elaborate, and have described them in ways implying that aspiring souls must pass over the specified rounds in order to gain the high summit of experience.

This feature may be only a subordinate

ground of criticism. Possibly the question may be raised whether it affords any basis of objection, since it is no essential characteristic of mysticism, and has not been universally exemplified. But it shows at least that mystics are not wholly proof against a temptation to formalism, simply because of their profound emphasis on the experiential element. It is possible to devise a sort of strait-jacket for experience itself by a too exact and elaborate formulation of its necessary stages.

## XI

Finally, mysticism in its historical form is subject to criticism on the score of a certain tendency to exalt the value of absorption in divine contemplation, to a relative disparagement of the worth of practical activity. Plotinus gave expression to this tendency in his teaching, though happily his practice was on a better plane. He is reported to have said that, as the sensible world is the shadow of the intelligible world, so is action a shadow of contemplation suited to weak-minded persons. Christian mystics have not infrequently taken pains to repudiate this theoretical extreme. Indeed, some of the most radical of them, as appears in preceding citations, have most energetically asserted the worth and the

necessity of a right practical activity. It remains true nevertheless that many of them have painted, as the consummate ideal of religious experience, that stage of contemplation in which the soul is so absorbed in God as to be lost to the world and even to itself. In short, they do not appear in this relation to be fully in harmony with themselves. As the Buddhist doctrine of obligatory benevolence agrees ill with the other Buddhist doctrine that a state of absolute cessation from all desire is the ideal state, so the stress of the mystics upon practical activity is not well adjusted to their picture of a state of pure contemplation, of utter passivity, as the highest good, the incomparable realization of the human spirit. The suggestion is unavoidable that they must have been in error on the one side or the other. And there is very scanty room to doubt that they overestimated the state of passivity, the state ensuing from a submergence of the concrete individual life in the abyss of Deity. The truer ideal is presented us in the Christ who walked the earth fully conscious of its affairs; but walked it at the same time as a citizen of heaven, illuminated at every step by the light of the Father's face, and finding his meat and drink in doing the Father's will.

## XII

At this point it is incumbent upon us to emphasize a thought which has already been expressed, namely, that the undesirable results which can be pointed out indicate not so much the necessary outcome of mysticism as the exposures to which it is subject. It fulfills a great religious function in magnifying the incomparable riches which lie in the divine sphere, and which are made the property of the human soul rather by divine gift, in answer to genuine or voluntary receptivity, than through mere human striving. As stressing this momentous truth it has a valuable mission to fulfill in every age. The one demand is that it should be safeguarded against the extremes to which it is exposed. In equivalent terms we might say, the one demand is that it should conform to the New Testament type. There we have most intimate unity depicted without any compromise of distinct personality. There, too, intense devotement of self to God is reconciled with the payment of the full debt to social interests. The peculiarity, the unique excellence, of the mediation of Christ is that it unites at once to God and to man. As the Son of God, whose whole being is penetrated with a filial consciousness, Christ

brings the responsive believer into most intimate communion with the Father. At the same time, as the Son of man, the Elder Brother of the race, he constitutes the ideal center of human brotherhood, and serves to bind the believer closely to his fellows. Let the mystic, then, retain his lofty conception of possible enrichment in and through communion with God; but let him also keep close to the Christ of the New Testament.





**ESSAY IX**  
**BAHAISM HISTORICALLY AND**  
**CRITICALLY CONSIDERED**



## ESSAY IX

### BAHAISM HISTORICALLY AND CRITICALLY CONSIDERED

#### I. ANTECEDENTS

BAHAISM, or the religious system emanating from Baha Ullah, had its immediate antecedent in Babism, of which, indeed, it may be characterized as a modified edition designed by its author to supersede the original. The rise of Babism was due above all else to the doctrine of the Imamate as held by the Shiites, an important sectarian division of Mohammedanism, and the one which gained a predominant position in Persia. Along with this main cause may be associated certain auxiliary influences which colored and leavened Persian Mohammedanism.

The Shiites differed from the main body of Mohammedans, or the Sunnites, in a twofold respect on the subject of headship. In the first place they contended that the headship over the faithful ought to have passed directly from Mohammed to his son-in-law Ali, and to have been continued in the line of his descendants. Accordingly, they regarded the first three

caliphs, Abu Bakr, Omar, and Othman, as usurpers who delayed the coming of Ali into his proper inheritance. In like manner they esteemed the Ommeyyades, who established their line at Damascus (661-750), and the Abbasides, who ruled at Bagdad (750-1258), as nefarious intruders, who not only kept out the descendants of Ali from the rulership, but slew them one after another, employing in most instances the secret hand of the poisoner. Thus the Shiites bewailed the sad fate of the legitimate succession which began with Ali and ran to the twelfth in the list of proper heirs. This twelfth, known as the Imam Mahdi, they regarded not as dying, but as mysteriously disappearing (A. D. 940), and as being able still, through specially qualified representatives, called Babs (that is, Gates), to guide the faithful. Of these temporary guides four appeared in succession, and then followed a long period of occultation. The office, however, of the Imam, as the legitimate successor of the Arabian Prophet was called in Shiite ranks, continued to be assigned enormous importance.

In the second place the Shiites differed from the Sunnites in their conception of the distinctive characteristics of the office of headship. Not only did the former entertain special views on the question of the rightful incumbents,

but they also stood in contrast with the Sunnites in their conception of the basis on which the office could be held and of the necessary endowments of the legitimate occupant. "According to the belief of the latter," to quote Professor E. G. Browne, "the vicegerency of the Prophet is a matter to be determined by the choice and election of his followers, and the visible head of the Mussulman world is qualified for the lofty position which he holds less by any special divine grace than by a combination of orthodoxy and administrative capacity. According to the Imamite [or Shiite] view, on the other hand, the vicegerency was a matter altogether spiritual; an office conferred by God alone, first by his Prophet, and afterward by those who so succeeded him, and having nothing to do with the popular choice or approval. In a word the Caliph of the Sunnis is merely the outward and visible Defender of the Faith: the Imam of the Shiites is the divinely ordained successor of the Prophet, one endowed with all perfections and spiritual gifts, one whom all the faithful must obey, whose decision is absolute and final, whose wisdom is superhuman, and whose words are authoritative."<sup>1</sup>

The Shiite doctrine of the importance of

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<sup>1</sup>A Traveller's Narrative, Note O, pp. 296-298.

the Imam and of the possibility of practical connection with him through a special medium was well adapted to produce a tense expectation in so impressionable a people as the Persians. In the early part of the nineteenth century a fresh impulse was given to expectation by the so-called Sheikhi school founded by Sheikh Ahmad. This school awarded special emphasis to the need of communication with the absent Imam, and the leader who followed Ahmad, namely Haji Kazim, formally sanctioned the hope that the chosen agent for such communication was about to be disclosed.

Out of this ferment of Shiite theory, longing, and expectation Babism was generated. In 1844 a young man, twenty-four years of age, a disciple of Haji Kazim, who bore the name of Mirza Ali Mohammed, announced himself as the Bab, and began to speak with authority as the representative of the Imam Mahdi. The conditions under which he appeared clearly emphasize the fact that Babism was an offshoot of the Shiite doctrine of the Imamate. As Bahaism derived its effective impulse and much of its content from Babism, its historical genesis must in large part be referred to the same source.

A secondary and less specific source may be

described as the visionary and mystical type of piety which for a long period had been very much at home in Persia. A prominent phase of this type of religion is known as Sufism, which departed widely from the Koranic doctrine of a sovereign God somewhat externally related to the world, advocated oftentimes a strong view of divine immanence, ran at the extreme squarely into pantheism, and in some instances gave currency to such views on intermediaries between God and the world as are found in Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism. On the question of the actual historical connection between Sufism and Bahaism some diversity of opinion has obtained. The pronounced subjectivity or leaning to individualism, distinctive of Sufism, was undoubtedly contrasted with the authoritative regulation of religion, both in the matter of teaching and practice, which came to be asserted for Baha Ullah, and ultimately a polemical attitude was taken by the latter toward the former. But this does not preclude the supposition that the later movement derived a certain impulse and leaven from the earlier. Professor Browne notices that to some Sufis and mystics Babism at its rise commended itself as a kind of organized Sufism.<sup>2</sup> He reports also that he met a

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<sup>2</sup>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, July, 1889.



few Babis who held the Sufi doctrine of the oneness of the highest portion of the human soul with the divine essence.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore he refers to various sentences of the Babi or Bahai literature as containing echoes of the sayings of noted Sufi writers.<sup>4</sup> Roemer expresses the judgment that what appears in the earlier writings of Baha Ullah—belonging to the period antecedent to the publication of his own special claims—was substantially Sufism, though joined with a higher regard for the historical in religion than was generally characteristic of Sufi mysticism.<sup>5</sup> Without pronouncing on the legitimacy of this opinion, we may safely conclude that Sufi teaching made an appreciable contribution to Babism and through that to Bahaism.

## II. HISTORICAL SKETCH

The attractive personality and intense earnestness of Mirza Ali Mohammed conspired with the special conditions furnished by Persian Mohammedanism to secure a ready hearing for his message. Many thousands accepted him as the Bab, the Gate of effective communication with the unseen Imam Mahdi. As the

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<sup>3</sup>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, October, 1889.

<sup>4</sup>Browne's Introduction to Life and Teaching of Abbas Effendi by Myron Phelps, pp. xvi, xvii.

<sup>5</sup>Die Babi-Behai, p. 81.

tide of success advanced he was emboldened to enlarge his claims. Before the close of his brief career he let it be known that he was himself to be regarded as the Mahdi, and gave himself the significant title of the Point, indicating thereby the fact that he was to be accounted a center of revelation. Expression was given to his religious scheme in a number of writings, the most important of which was the Bayan.

It was a well-approved maxim among the Shiites that both the spiritual and the temporal rule would belong to the Imam when he should appear. There is little ground for surprise, therefore, in the fact that when the followers of the Bab became a considerable force, and were subjected to persecution by the Persian authorities, they resorted to armed resistance. For a brief space they seemed well able to hold their own; but at length they were worsted largely by the treachery of their foes. The Bab, who had stood aloof from the armed conflict, and who, indeed, at the time was a prisoner, was executed in 1850. Two years later an attempt by a few of the Babis to assassinate the Shah led to a fresh outbreak of persecution. From that time the Babi movement entered upon a stage of quiet and relatively secret propagandism in Persia.

One feature in the teaching of the Bab laid a foundation for an additional movement which tended to overcloud the importance of his own mission. In numerous instances he referred to a bearer of divine revelation who should come after him, styling him the *one whom God shall manifest*, and ascribing to him singular authority. It is not on record that he predicted the speedy advent of this personage. Evidence to the contrary lies in the extent to which he fashioned a system of rules for his followers and in his appointment of a successor. This successor was a young man by the name of Mirza Yahya, who is commonly mentioned by his title Subh-i-Azal (the Dawn of the Eternal). After the deadly onslaught on his party in 1852 he withdrew from Persia and took refuge in Bagdad. The same city became a gathering place for other exiled Babis, including an older half-brother, Mirza Husain Ali, known in his later career as Baha Ullah (the Glory of God).

That Subh-i-Azal was accepted by the whole body of his coreligionists as the legitimate successor of the Bab is a well-grounded historical conclusion. In the narrative of Hazi Mirza Jani, who was among the martyrs of 1852, the appointment of Subh-i-Azal by testamentary deposition of the Bab is ex-

pressly asserted.<sup>6</sup> As this assertion was made before any rival was in the field, there is no reason to doubt its truthfulness. Moreover, it is confirmed by the testimony of Bahais in Persia with whom Professor Browne conferred, and who assured him that Subh-i-Azal was commonly recognized as the Bab's successor up to the time of the departure of the exiles from Bagdad.<sup>7</sup> This seems to have occurred in 1863, when the Turkish government transported the refugees to Constantinople, and thence after a brief interval to Adrianople. A year or two before the transference from Bagdad the *Ikan* was written by Baha Ullah, and in this writing the significant fact is to be noted that there is an implicit acknowledgment of the headship of Subh-i-Azal.<sup>8</sup>

Already in the Bagdad period the intimation thrown out by the Bab respecting the great mission of the *one whom God shall manifest* began to work as a leaven among the enthusiasts who had gathered to his standard. Mirza Asadullah claimed to be this predicted leader, and several others put forth a like claim.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile an ambition to figure as

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<sup>6</sup>Browne, *The New History*, pp. 374, 381.

<sup>7</sup>*A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 322.

<sup>8</sup>Browne, Article Bab, *Babis in Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

<sup>9</sup>*A Traveller's Narrative*, p. 358.

this crowning manifestation of God on earth began to work in the mind of one who was far more competent to gain credence for his claims. This was Baha Ullah, the half-brother of Subh-i-Azal and his senior by thirteen years. The daughter of the former reports that he made known to his eldest son, on the eve of his departure from Bagdad, the conviction that he was the *one whom God shall manifest*.<sup>10</sup> Such may have been the fact; but the evidence points clearly to the conclusion that the first open declaration of his high mission by Baha Ullah was made at Adrianople about 1867. This declaration caused a rupture in the ranks of the Babis which has never been healed. Subh-i-Azal resented it as an unwarrantable intrusion into the headship. He argued that "‘he whom God shall manifest’ cannot be expected until the religion founded by the Bab, with its attendant laws and institutions, had obtained currency among some of the nations of the earth."<sup>11</sup> A sharp controversy resulted. In 1868 the Turkish government took cognizance of the dissension, and banished Subh-i-Azal to Famagusta in Cyprus and Baha Ullah

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<sup>10</sup>Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, pp. 30ff.

<sup>11</sup>Professor E. D. Ross, *Bahaism* (in *Great Religions of the World*, pp. 208, 209). Compare Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l’Asie Centrale*, p. 333.

with his partisans to Acre in Syria. After two years of somewhat rigorous imprisonment at Acre Baha Ullah was permitted to dwell in a comfortable house, and nine years later he was given the liberty of the city and the neighboring country. Stories of his life-long martyrdom as a prisoner have but a scanty basis in fact.

In the schism which resulted from the clash between Subh-i-Azal and Baha Ullah by far the larger proportion of Babis came soon to adhere to the more radical claimant, and so merited to bear henceforth the name of Bahais. This result may be attributed in part to the very extent of the claims of Baha Ullah, in part to the fact that he was a man of bolder temper and larger ability than Subh-i-Azal, and in part to the new aspect which he gave to his religion, in that he loosened its connection with Shiite Mohammedanism, disengaged it for the time being from political connections, and sought to endow it with an appearance of universality.

The speedy success of Bahaism was discounted in some measure by events which it is difficult to place under any other category than that of moral disasters. In the first place a series of assassinations occurred by which adherents of Subh-i-Azal were cut off.



It is not positively in evidence that the Bahais who committed these crimes acted under orders, but that they were capable of planning and committing such deeds makes no favorable comment on the bearing of their master toward opponents; nor is the case helped by the contention of those Bahais who have argued that a prophet has as good a right to remove one who is injurious to religion as a surgeon has to amputate a gangrened limb.<sup>12</sup> In the second place the extent to which falsification of history took place in the interest of Bahai propagandism must be rated, in the comprehensive view, as a moral disaster. Two writings in particular come into account in this connection. The earlier of these, *The New History*, was designed to supersede the work of Mirza Jani which was mentioned above. In it all that portion of the history which was favorable to the claims of Subh-i-Azal as successor and vicegerent of the Bab, and adverse to the

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<sup>12</sup>Browne, *The New History*, p. xxiii; *A Traveller's Narrative*, p. 358ff.; *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 406; Wilson, *Bahaism and its Claims*, pp. 221ff. How boldly a zealous propagandist in the American field can defend this damaging episode may be seen in these words of I. G. Kheiralla: "Baha Ullah acknowledged that his followers assassinated the Azalists, and every true Bahai should do the same. On my part it gives me great delight to acknowledge it, and greater satisfaction that it happened" (*O Christians! Why Do You Believe Not on Christ?* 1917, pp. 61, 62).



supereminence of Baha Ullah, was suppressed.<sup>13</sup> The other writing, entitled *A Traveller's Narrative*, savors of still more radical perversion. Ignoring the higher titles which the Bab applied to himself, it consigned him to the role of a mere herald or forerunner of Baha Ullah. In place of admitting a genuine appointment by the Bab of Subh-i-Azal to be his successor, it foists upon the narrative the fiction that the ostensible appointment was a mere blind to shield Baha from hostile attack, it being definitely understood by the Bab himself that he was to be his real successor.<sup>14</sup> Had the history been as here alleged, we should have a sham appointment, fitted to deceive and actually deceiving substantially the whole body of the faithful—a performance of a highly equivocal character. But there are ample reasons for regarding the alleged history as an apologetic invention, and the responsibility for the circulation of the falsehood reaches to the foremost leaders of the Bahai cult. It is understood to have been written by Abbas Effendi, the oldest son of Baha Ullah, and more than any other his official successor.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>See Professor Browne's translation with added notes, especially Appendix II.

<sup>14</sup>Pp. 62, 63.

<sup>15</sup>Browne, *The New History*, p. xxxi; *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1892, pp. 306, 665.

That the father gave it countenance cannot well be doubted, for there is reason to believe that the Traveller's Narrative was written in 1886, or a considerable interval before the death of Baha Ullah, that having occurred in 1892. The Traveller's Narrative was concocted for the purpose of mightily fortifying the claims of Bahaism. In reality it weakens them by all the force of a moral disaster.

The accession to the headship of the Bahais by Abbas Effendi, or, to use his titular designation, Abdul Baha (Servant of Baha), was not undisputed. His three brothers, or, rather, half-brothers, Mohammed Ali, Ziah Ullah, and Badi Ullah, especially the first named, questioned his title, and charged him with falsifying documents in the interest of his unwarrantable claims. The opposition was not without its effect. A memorial of it appeared even in this country, where as prominent a propagandist as I. G. Kheiralla concluded to take sides with Mohammed Ali.<sup>16</sup> For the most part, however, allegiance was given to Abdul Baha, who diligently employed his diplomatic talent to extend Bahaism into western lands.

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<sup>16</sup>Kheiralla's estimate of the more commonly accepted claimant is given succinctly in this form: "Abbas Effendi is the abomination that maketh desolate which is mentioned in Daniel."

In 1911-12 he visited France, England, and the United States, his stay in this country reaching from April 12 to December 5, 1912.

As respects the spread of the Bahai cult its partisans have sometimes indulged in very exaggerated statements. More than one writer has spoken of millions of adherents.<sup>17</sup> It has even been claimed that half the population of Persia belongs to the new religion. Doubtless in that country the Bahais amount to an appreciable factor. Just how large this should be regarded is made somewhat conjectural by the relative secrecy which is maintained by the members of the sect. In accordance with a very broad scheme of accommodation they are permitted to practice full outward conformity to the current Mohammedanism. Under such conditions no trustworthy enumeration is possible. We are left to the judgment of those who have had the benefit of long residence in the country. To this class belongs Samuel Graham Wilson, who had been a resident for thirty-two years at the time of writing, and had made a very thorough study of Bahaism. He says: "Some judicious non-Bahai writers allow the Bahais

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<sup>17</sup>Kheiralla in the closing years of the nineteenth century reckoned their number at fifty-five millions (Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*, p. 143).

half a million or less in Persia on a basis of ten millions of population. American missionaries, as Jordan at Teheran, Frame at Resht, and Shedd at Urumia, calculate that the number in Persia does not exceed one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand. After careful inquiry I agree with this estimate."<sup>18</sup> The same writer draws the conclusion that "Bahais outside of Persia are probably all told not more than fifteen thousand, and one third of these are Persians in Russia." As respects this country, he notes that there are Bahai congregations in sixteen States, and that "the census of 1906 reported twelve hundred and eighty Bahais, which may have increased to two or three thousand."

### III. A GLANCE AT BAHAI DOCTRINES

1. *The conception of God.* The Bahai exposition of this theme is not characterized either by profundity, clarity, or full self-consistency. On the one hand sentences occur which magnify the transcendence of God, and convey the impression that he is above all human understanding, and even above all contact with finite beings. On the other hand it is asserted that God is capable

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<sup>18</sup>Bahatism and its Claims, 1915, p. 26, Fleming H. Revell Company, New York.

of manifestation, and that authentic manifestations of him have been vouchsafed. Both orders of statements occur in close conjunction in the *Ikan* of Baha Ullah. "The Unseen Divinity and Essence of Oneness," it is there declared, "is beyond ascent and descent, ingress and egress; is exalted above the praise of every praiser and the comprehension of every comprehender. . . . No relation, connection, separation, union, nearness, remoteness, position or reference is possible between him and contingent things. . . . Therefore all the prophets, divines, sages, and wise men confess their lack of attainment to the knowledge of that Essence of Essences and admit their inability to know and reach that Truth of Truths." In the sentences which follow, on the other hand, it is assumed that there are elect persons—"Mirrors or Essences of Sanctity"—whose office it is to "express that eternal essence and Preexistent Entity. These Mirrors of Sanctity and Dawning-places of Divinity fully express the Sun of Existence and Essence of Desire. For instance, their knowledge expresses his knowledge, their power his power, their dominion his dominion, their beauty his beauty, and their manifestation his manifestation. . . . Therefore it is said: 'There is no difference between thee and them, except

that they are thy servants and thy creatures.' This is the station of 'I am he and he is me' recorded in the tradition. . . . These Holy Temples are the eternal Primal mirrors which express the Invisible of the Invisibles and all his names and attributes, such as Knowledge, Power, Dominion, Grandeur, Mercy, Wisdom, Glory, Generosity, and Beneficence."<sup>19</sup>

Statements equally emphatic on the exaltation of the divine essence are found in the words of Abdul Baha in conjunction with antithetic declarations that the "Manifestations," or select Prophets, truly manifest God. "The knowledge," he says, "of the reality of the Divinity is impossible and unattainable, but the knowledge of the Manifestations of God is the knowledge of God, for the bounties, splendors, and divine attributes are apparent in them. Therefore if man attains to the knowledge of the Manifestations of God he will attain to the knowledge of God."<sup>20</sup>

A justification of this pronounced antithesis between an unknowable reality or essence and knowable manifestations is not discoverable. It looks as though Baha Ulla and Abdul Baha

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<sup>19</sup>The *Ikan* (or *Ighan*), Translated by Ali Kuli Khan, pp. 69-73.

<sup>20</sup>Barney, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 257, 258.



were victims of traditional forms of statement and had not duly considered their conflicting implications. A reality or essence that can be truly manifested is certainly capable of being known, at least partially. One may allege, indeed, as does Abdul Baha, that the Divine Reality is unknown with regard to its essence, and is known with regard to its attributes;<sup>21</sup> but this is an artificial representation. Attributes define the essence or name the modes of existence without which it cannot be thought to exist.

A second antithesis, though not quite so distinct as the foregoing, may be noticed in the Bahai conception of God. Over against the theistic point of view there are traces of pantheistic thinking, and it is not altogether clear to which side the preference inclines. Abdul Baha criticizes the pantheism of the Sufis as not doing justice to the divine transcendence.<sup>22</sup> Yet it is noticeable that so friendly an interpreter as Myron Phelps imputes to him a form of belief savoring distinctly of pantheism. "The Bahai conception of the Supreme Being," he says, "is not a personality, but an essence, an all-pervading Force or Power, frequently referred to as

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<sup>21</sup>Some Answered Questions, pp. 255, 256.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 326-334.



Love, or Truth, or Life....The universe exists for the purpose of individualizing the Infinite, Absolute and Eternal Essence."<sup>23</sup> Baha Ullah in one or another connection, as for instance, in his epistle to the Shah, speaks of God as transcendent personal Deity. But, on the other hand, he has penned sentences which easily can be understood as containing a pantheistic leaven. One of the statements cited above from the *Ikan* is not unnaturally taken in this sense, namely, the reference to the "Mirrors of Sanctity," as being so intimately united with God as to make it permissible for any one of them to apply to himself the proposition, "I am he and he is me." Another sentence that lends itself to a like interpretation is this: "God alone is the one Power which animates and dominates all things, which are but manifestations of his energy."<sup>24</sup> The inference seems warrantable, therefore, that commentators who have detected a pantheistic strain in Bahaism, have not been destitute of ostensible grounds for their criticism. It is noticeable that a conspicuous representative in this country, while defining God as "infinite Personality," has been

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<sup>23</sup>Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi, pp. 114, 115.

<sup>24</sup>Words of Wisdom, p. 61, cited by Wilson, Bahaism and its Claims, pp. 88, 89.

willing to charge Abdul Baha with pantheistic teaching.<sup>25</sup>

We judge that we shall not be far out of the way if we liken the pantheistic element in Bahaism to that of Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism. Like these systems, it combines with a formal stress on the transcendence of God a recognition of intermediaries between God and the world which have essentially the character of effluxes or emanations from the Godhead. Bahaism may not be much inclined to apply the name of emanations to its higher prophets, the so-called Manifestations; but often it attaches quite as much of that character to them as pertains to the Gnostic Aeons. This point will receive illustration under the next topic.

2. *Method and stages of revelation.* Babism and Bahaism alike maintain that in the field of religion authentic and adequate revelation takes place only through the instrumentality of Prophets or "Manifestations." They are set for the guidance of the race, and there is no substitute for their message.

Much emphasis is placed upon the interconnection of the Manifestations and their essential agreement in teaching. Not infrequently their unity is pushed to the extent

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<sup>25</sup>Kheiralla, cited by Wilson, p. 89.

of affirming in some sense their identity. Thus Jani, in the earliest extant history of Babism, speaks of them as identical in essence, just as the sun which shines to-day is the same as that which shone yesterday or that which will shine to-morrow.<sup>26</sup> A similar representation is employed by Abdul Baha. All the prophets, he affirms, are united in their message. Their variations are only comparable to those of the sun which in different seasons ascends from different rising points on the horizon.<sup>27</sup> "Each time God sends a Great One to us we are given new life, but the truth each Manifestation brings is the same. . . . The real teaching of Buddha is the same as the teaching of Jesus Christ. The teaching of all the Prophets is the same in character."<sup>28</sup> From this point of view the obligation of men universally to accept each Manifestation is asserted. "As Christians believe in Moses, so should the Jews believe in Jesus. As the Mohammedans believe in Christ and in Moses, so likewise the Jews and the Christians should believe in Mohammed."<sup>29</sup> To ease the task of believing in things apparently contradictory resort is sometimes made to the idea that the later

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<sup>26</sup>Browne, *The New History*, p. 331.

<sup>27</sup>Abdul Baha in London, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 50, 57.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.

oracles of a religion represent corruptions of the earlier. Thus Kheiralla invents an opportunity to idealize the teaching of Mohammed by bringing in the assumption that after the death of the Prophet a false Koran was substituted for the true.<sup>30</sup>

In their visible earthly career the Manifestations are subject to the vicissitudes of the temporal sphere. But intrinsically, in consequence of their extraordinary nature and endowments, they are closely associated with eternity. In the passage cited above from the *Ikan* of Baha Ullah they are called "Eternal and Primal Mirrors which express the Invisible of the Invisibles." A transcendence of the temporal sphere is also assigned to them in these words of Abdul Baha: "Their heavenly condition embraces all things, knows all mysteries, discovers all signs, and rules over all things; before as well as after their mission it is the same. That is why Christ has said: 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last': that is to say, there never has been and never shall be any change and alteration in me."<sup>31</sup> This amounts to affirming that the lofty endowments of the Manifestations are theirs by virtue of their original nature and

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<sup>30</sup>Baha Ullah, p. 164.

<sup>31</sup>Some Answered Questions, p. 254.

position, and not something loaned to them in time. At least this is true of the first rank of Manifestations, in which Abdul Baha includes Abraham, Moses, Christ, Mohammed, the Bab, and Baha Ullah.<sup>32</sup> As for the secondary or dependent Manifestations, like Solomon, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, while their endowments suffice for infallible teaching, they are more of the nature of a charism or special bestowment. In some connections the endowment of the major Manifestations is described under the name of the "Primal Will." This transcendent entity, which seems to be viewed as a kind of projection or emanation from God, is regarded as expressed or embodied equally in the several Manifestations of the first rank.<sup>33</sup> A certain vagueness attaches to the exposition of the subject, and one hesitates to name an exact historical parallel; but, as has been intimated, there are features which remind one of the intermediaries between God and the world postulated by Gnosticism. Also analogies to Philonian and Neo-Platonic representations are discoverable.

The authority of a Prophet or Manifestation is naturally made correspondent with his supereminence in rank and endowment. Rep-

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<sup>32</sup>Some Answered Questions, p. 189.

<sup>33</sup>Sell, *Essays on Islam*, pp. 82-85.

representatives of Bahaism whom Professor Browne met in Persia, while admitting that one needs to be convinced that the claims of a person who functions as a prophet are well-founded, asserted that when once assent has been yielded there is no longer any prerogative of criticism or dissent. The believer must accept and follow implicitly whatever teaching may be imposed, even though it radically disagrees with things previously held.<sup>34</sup> At the beginning of the *Kitab-i-Akdas*, Baha Ullah greatly emphasizes the need of recognizing the organ of divine manifestation. "Whoever," it is said, "attaineth unto this hath attained unto all good, and whoever is debarred therefrom is of the people of error, even though he produce all [manner of good] deeds."<sup>35</sup> The will of a Manifestation, says Abdul Baha, should be taken by believers as the law of God. "They are not to deviate as much as a hair's breadth from it."<sup>36</sup> He declares, furthermore, that in the absence of access to the invisible Essence, the Manifestation must be treated as a foremost object of faith and even of worship. "In this world all men must turn their faces

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<sup>34</sup>A Year Amongst the Persians, pp. 302, 303.

<sup>35</sup>Browne, Article Bab, Babis in *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

<sup>36</sup>Barney, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 200, 201.



toward Him-whom-God-shall-Manifest. He is the dawning place of Divinity and the Manifestation of Deity. He is the ultimate goal, the Adored One of all and the Worshipped One of all."<sup>37</sup> "The Manifestations of God," writes C. M. Remey, "have been the unique centers from which the world has received all knowledge of God, and outside of these divine channels no divine enlightenment has ever come to humanity."<sup>38</sup>

Though the authority of any Manifestation belonging to the first rank is equal to that of any other in the sense of imposing an unlimited obligation upon the contemporary generation and upon the generations following up to the age of the next Manifestation, it is not to be overlooked that the later organ of revelation is admitted to have a certain advantage over an earlier. As being confronted by more advanced conditions he can give a broader scope and a higher reach to his message. This point of view was applied by the Bab in the claim that his oracles had a preeminence over the Koran like the preeminence of the Koran over the Gospels or of Mohammed over Christ.<sup>39</sup> After a very brief interval it was applied by

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<sup>37</sup>Star of the West, Feb. 7, 1914, p. 304.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., September 8, 1913, p. 171.

<sup>39</sup>Nicolas, *Le Beyan Arabe*, pp. 126, 127.



Baha Ullah and his associates, to the effect of practically setting aside the Babi dispensation. Their own higher revelation, it was assumed, made it appropriate to treat the foregoing as virtually obsolete. Indeed, Baha Ullah in his comment on the Koranic phrase, "when the heaven shall be cloven asunder," seems to have formally justified the notion that the later dispensation annuls the preceding. "By this is meant," he says, "the heaven of religions elevated during every dispensation and cloven asunder in every subsequent Manifestation, that is, abolished and annulled."<sup>40</sup> Abdul Baha recognized the same point of view, maintaining that the last in the list of divine messengers, as speaking to men better able to understand the truth, is able to impart a fuller revelation.<sup>41</sup> Making specific reference to the relation between Christ and Baha Ullah, he declared that the latter gave in full flower what the former had given only in the bud.<sup>42</sup> Representatives of the Bahai cult in the United States have not been less open and emphatic in the expression of their opinion that Christ has been superseded. "The Revelation of Jesus," says

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<sup>40</sup>The *Ikan*, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup>Phelps, *The Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, pp. 126, 127.

<sup>42</sup>Abdul Baha in London, pp. 93, 94.

Remey, "is no longer the Point of Guidance to the world, as it was in the past. . . . We must all understand that with the coming of the New Covenant all teachings of the past *are past*, and that in this new day of God only that which is revealed by the Supreme Pen, Baha Ullah, and that which issues from the center of the Covenant, Abdul Baha, is spiritual food for the people and is to be taught."<sup>43</sup>

In connection with such statements the question naturally arises as to what guarantee is provided that the Bahai revelation will hold good any longer than its predecessors—any longer, for instance, than the revelation of the Bab. It was after Baha Ullah had declared himself that Mary Baker G. Eddy and Madame Blavatsky came onto the stage with their respective oracles, not to mention the founder of Theomonism and others. Why may not a devotee of Christian Science or Theosophy be permitted to affirm the obligation of all antecedent systems to retire in favor of the later-appearing system? This uncomfortable liability of being superseded in short order was not overlooked by Baha Ullah, and he prudently sought to raise against it an effectual barrier. In the *Kitab-i-Akdas* he wrote, "Whoever lays claim to a matter (that is, a mission) ere one

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<sup>43</sup>Star of the West, December 31, 1913, pp. 269, 271.

thousand full years have passed, verily he is a lying impostor.”<sup>44</sup> This is as strong a verbal fence as could well be made; but verbal fences are likely to give way before the mighty pressure of enkindled ambitions. Indeed, there have not been wanting those who have been ready to infer that the high assumptions of Abdul Baha involved a real breach in the fence which Baha Ullah attempted to set up in the quoted sentence.

A curious feature in the dealing with the theme of the Manifestations is the prodigal manner in which Bahai writers have employed biblical pictures and forecasts as credentials of their own prophets from Mohammed to Baha Ullah. As their references indicate, they have borrowed in this procedure from the Millerites and other radical Adventists of the preceding century. Resorting to the arbitrary assumption of their Christian tutors, they have taken “days” in prophetic discourse to mean “years,” and thus have extracted from the book of Daniel and the Apocalypse numbers which reach down into the modern era. Their jugglery in exegesis, however, differs from the procedure of their predecessors, since they apply the numbers rather to events in

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<sup>44</sup>Pp. 13, 14, lithographed edition cited by Ross, *Babism* (in *Great Religions of the World*), p. 212.

the Mohammedan domain than to the field of Jewish or Christian history. As prominent an authority as Abdul Baha has thought it worth while to attempt to support the Bahai cause with these artificial proofs. For example, making the three and one half times of Daniel xii. 7 to denote twelve hundred and sixty years, he says: "The Bab, the precursor of Baha Ullah, appeared in the year 1260 from the Hejira of Mohammed, by the reckoning of Islam." Again foisting years into the place of days in connection with Daniel xii, 11, he remarks: "The year 1290 from the proclamation of the mission of Mohammed was the year 1280 of the Hejira, or 1863-1864 of our era. It was at this epoch (April, 1864) that Baha Ullah, on leaving Bagdad for Constantinople, declared to those who surrounded him that he was the Manifestation announced by the Bab." In like manner Abdul Baha finds in the forty-two months of Revelation xi. 2 a reference to the twelve hundred and sixty years which reached from the Hejira of Mohammed to the disclosure of the Bab. The two witnesses mentioned in the same chapter he identifies with Mohammed and Ali. With an exhibition of genuine Shiite antipathy he makes the beast ascending from the pit to figure the Ommeyyades. In the woman por-

trayed in Revelation xii he sees the law of God that descended on Mohammed, while the sun with which she was clothed and the moon under her feet typify the two kingdoms of Persia and Turkey, and the twelve stars in her crown stand for the twelve Imams. Other interpretations of a kindred tenor might be noted.<sup>45</sup>

A genius for utilizing prophecy, not second to that of Abdul Baha, has been put on exhibition by Kheiralla. Mohammed's appearance and influence upon the world, he assures us, were foretold by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, and Christ. As for the Bab and Baha Ullah, he informs us that nearly the whole list of the biblical prophets have occupied themselves in describing their coming, the incidents of their career, or the world conditions contemporary with their ministry.<sup>46</sup> The rejection of Subh-i-Azal, on account of his refusal to accept the claims of Baha Ullah, he likens to the casting of Satan out of heaven.<sup>47</sup> In less detailed form a similar use is made of the prophecies by Thornton Chase.<sup>48</sup> Another American convert, A. P. Dodge, asserts of Bahaism: "The whole grand work is in fulfillment of

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<sup>45</sup>See Barney, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 49-82.

<sup>46</sup>Baha Ullah, pp. 344ff.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 417.

<sup>48</sup>The Bahai Revelation, pp. 30ff.

prophecy in both the Old Testament and the New."<sup>49</sup>

3. *The nature and destiny of man.* The Bahai literature is rather meager and inconclusive on the theme. From the extent to which the successive Manifestations are identified with one another it might be inferred that a place is given to the supposition of pre-existence or reincarnation. Abdul Baha, however, contends that the advocates of reincarnation furnish no proofs, and argues against it at some length.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand Kheiralla explicitly approves the doctrine of reincarnation.<sup>51</sup> As in the rift in the brotherhood the larger part went with Abdul Baha, it may be presumed that his view has the larger currency.

On the question of evolution Abdul Baha and Kheiralla agree that man did not originate from animal antecedents by transmutation of species. Through whatever stages he has passed in the matrix of the world he has been of the same species all the way through.<sup>52</sup>

In respect of man's present condition little account is made of human sinfulness. A

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<sup>49</sup>Cited by Speer, *Missions and Modern History*, I, p. 165.

<sup>50</sup>Some Answered Questions, pp. 319-326.

<sup>51</sup>Baha Ullah, pp. 129-139, 249.

<sup>52</sup>Abdul Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 222-226; Kheiralla, *Baha Ullah*, pp. 143ff.



vigorous inculcation of the need of radical repentance is not characteristic of Bahai teaching. That teaching is not adapted, according to the judgment of a missionary observer, to generate moral stamina.<sup>53</sup>

Professor Browne has noticed the occasion for surprise which he experienced on the score of "the varying and unfixed character" of the Bahai teaching respecting the immortality of the soul.<sup>54</sup> In another connection he records the conclusion that, while all the Babis (or Bahais) deny a bodily resurrection, some disbelieve in personal immortality, or limit it to men endowed with a higher grade of spirit than pertains to ordinary mortals.<sup>55</sup> This limitation appears in the interpretation of Bahai teaching by Myron Phelps. For the masses wrapped in ignorance and selfishness, he says, there is no future except in the continued influence of their thoughts and deeds. "They are like the leaves of a tree which fall in myriads and only avail to enrich the soil."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Dr. Shedd, cited by Speer, *Missions and Modern History*, I, p. 182.

<sup>54</sup>Introduction to *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi* by Phelps, pp. xxi, xxii.

<sup>55</sup>Article Bab, Babis, *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

<sup>56</sup>*Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, pp. 121, 125. Compare Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, p. 334.



4. *Regulations for the family and the state.* The fundamental law of Bahaism permits bigamy, though in a mild way advising monogamy; that is, it permits a man to have two wives, but not a woman to have two husbands. The text of the law as recorded in the *Kitab-i-Akdas* of Baha Ullah is as follows: "God hath decreed you to marry. Beware of marrying more than two, and whosoever is content with one attaineth peace for himself and her."<sup>57</sup> Baha Ullah practiced the liberty granted by his law; or, rather, he transcended it as Mohammed in his time overstepped the rule which he laid down for believers in general. Very substantial evidence shows that he had three wives contemporaneously, or two wives and a concubine, and also that he took the second at a time when he already had children by the first.<sup>58</sup>

The law of divorce, as contained in the *Kitab-i-Akdas*, runs as follows: "If quarrels arise between a man and his wife, he may put her away. He may not give her absolute divorce at once, but must wait a year that

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<sup>57</sup>The Bab had established a like rule. Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, p. 346.

<sup>58</sup>Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative*, pp. 84, 361; *The New History*, pp. 273, 415; Wilson, *Bahaism and its Claims*, pp. 158-163.

perhaps he may be reconciled to her. At the end of this period, if he still wishes to put her away, he is at liberty to do so."<sup>59</sup>

It is to be observed that both in the permit of bigamy and in the law for divorce the subordination of the woman to the man is assumed. The principle of equality is unequivocally, if not formally, denied. Doubtless Bahaism improved somewhat on the customary Moslem regulations respecting the status of woman. But the improvement is not fundamental in principle. In practice, too, certain liberal parties among Moslems, who have felt the impact of Western civilization, are said to have gone even further than the Bahais in the concession of liberty and education to women.<sup>60</sup>

On the whole it must be said that the unwillingness of Western advocates of Bahaism to bring out the real facts respecting its domestic code, and respecting the way in which Baha Ullah himself illustrated the code in practice, is quite intelligible.<sup>61</sup>

Original Bahaism contemplated the displacement of the existing secular government, at

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<sup>59</sup>Browne, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, October, 1892.

<sup>60</sup>Wilson, pp. 169, 170.

<sup>61</sup>An exception appears in Kheiralla's outspoken defense of polygamy (In his book, "O Christians! Why Do Ye Believe Not on Christ?" 1917, pp. 77-86).

least in Persia, and the substitution of prophetic authority.<sup>62</sup> As is indicated in the Bayan, its program denied to unbelievers the right of residence in the five principal provinces of Persia, and also ordained that those who reject the faith should be deprived of their goods, on condition of restoration when they come to believe.<sup>63</sup>

From this platform Baha Ullah distinctly receded. Recognizing that professed loyalty to existing governments was for his followers a condition of existence, he resorted to the policy of political opportunism, and his lieutenants rewrote—and in good measure falsified—the early Babi history with the design of placating the royal house of Persia. All this, however, is far from implying that prophetic authority was designed in perpetuity to resign the control of the state to secular hands. Giving full scope to the expectation that his religion would come into the ascendant, Baha Ullah provided for the rule of the lesser and greater divisions of the world by Houses of Justice. These tribunals, made up of men holding the Bahai faith, are designed to direct both secular and religious affairs. The decisions of the

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<sup>62</sup>Browne, *The New History*, p. xvii.

<sup>63</sup>*The New History*, p. 441; Nicolas, *Le Beyan Arabe*, p. 147.

Houses of Justice, as is emphatically declared by Abdul Baha, will be final, and these decisions will be made in conformity with the prescriptions of Baha Ullah. In religious, civil, and criminal matters alike the voice of the Prophet of Acre will give the imperative word.<sup>64</sup> In short, nothing less than an iron-clad, world-dominating theocracy is contemplated. What degree of intellectual and religious liberty might be expected under this regime is suggested by the order of Abdul Baha that no tract, book, or translation on the Bahai religion shall be published without the prior submission of it to the censor at Acre.<sup>65</sup>

One great function which, it is presumed, will be fulfilled by the supreme House of Justice, is the conservation of international peace. Acting as a board of arbitration it will settle all disputes between the nations.<sup>66</sup> Great account was made of this phase of the Bahai scheme by Abdul Baha in his London addresses. The limited warrant for some of his representations will appear later.

5. *The ceremonial feature.* The very little that can be said on this subject needs to be

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<sup>64</sup>See the full citations of Wilson, pp. 141-147; Dreyfus, *The Universal Religion*, pp. 131ff.

<sup>65</sup>Star of the West, July 13, 1913, p. 121.

<sup>66</sup>Baha Ullah, *Tablet of the World*.

preceded by a reference to the singular arrangement of the calendar to which Bahatism resorted. Attaching immeasurable sanctity to the number nineteen, it makes the year to consist of nineteen months, each of which is composed of nineteen days. As this scheme gives a sum of only three hundred and sixty-one days, several days are added at the close of the year. From what point the series of years should be reckoned seems not to have been thoroughly determined. The beginning of the era has been placed at the manifestation of the Bab in 1844, again at the birth of Baha Ullah in 1817, still further at the year 1892, when Abdul Baha succeeded his father as visible head of the Bahai cult. In the whole arrangement of the calendar Christianity is left out of the account. Even the week of seven days, common to Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, is discarded, so far as authoritative recognition is concerned, though accommodation to Mohammedan customs, where the faith of Islam prevails, would necessarily involve a certain practical recognition of the seven-day interval. A special sanctity is attached to the first and ninth days of each month of nineteen days.

The Bahai prescriptions on fasting and prayer follow the Moslem rules with some

modifications. The last month, as specified in the revised calendar, is the one set apart for fasting, abstinence being enjoined from sunrise to sunset on each of its nineteen days. Prayers, embodied in prescribed formulas, are ordained to be repeated three times a day, and each prayer is to be accompanied by three prostrations. The worshiper is expected to face toward Acre. Congregational prayers are discountenanced, though Abdul Baha made some concessions to American disciples on this point. As respects sacramental rites, a "unity feast," which is in a manner a substitute for the eucharist, has place. For baptism there is no longer any need, according to a statement of Abdul Baha.<sup>67</sup> As might be inferred from the above, the public service of Bahai congregations is substantially limited to hymns, readings from the Bahai oracles, and expositions of the accepted teachings.

Formally Bahaism makes no mention of a priesthood as a factor in its system for the conduct of rites or other functions. But intrinsically it provides for one in the membership of the Houses of Justice. As absorbing in itself both civil and religious authority, and designed to serve as a substitute for the dictatorship of Abdul Baha, this membership

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<sup>67</sup>Some Answered Questions, pp. 105, 106.



could easily become, in case of any wide extension of Bahaism, a very formidable hierarchy.

#### IV. THE POSITION ACCORDED TO BAHÁ ULLAH AND TO ABDUL BAHÁ

In the exposition of the nature and authority attributed to the Prophet or Manifestation a basis of judgment on the position accorded to Bahá Ulláh has already been given. In that exposition it was noticed that apparently contradictory phases of teaching are found in juxtaposition. We cannot hope, therefore, to give a perfectly clear definition of the position assigned to Bahá Ulláh. Should we refer to him as an alleged incarnation of God, we could be directed to sentences in Baháí literature which seem to discountenance the idea of a divine incarnation. Some of these have been cited on a preceding page. They seem to be in line with this declaration of the Bab: "In truth the eternal essence does not incarnate itself in any creature."<sup>68</sup> On the other hand declarations are met with which as good as affirm that Bahá Ulláh is an incarnation of God, and especially of the Eternal Father. For instance, in the preface to the volume which he devotes to the founder of his religion Kheiralla frankly declares his

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<sup>68</sup>Nicolas, *Le Beyan Arabe*, p. 24.



purpose to demonstrate "that the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, has appeared in human form as Beha Ullah, and established his kingdom upon earth."<sup>69</sup> Again he writes: "The universal manifestation of Beha Ullah in Adrianople in 1867 was the revelation of his divinity to the whole world, for at that time he began to summon the kings and rulers of the earth to his spiritual banquet, announcing himself to be the Incarnation of the Everlasting Father."<sup>70</sup> That others of the Bahais have been ready to apply the name of God to the head of their cult is distinctly in evidence. When in Persia Professor Browne was advised "to go to Acre and see God."<sup>71</sup> A like character was assigned to Baha Ullah by the devotee at Tabriz, who declared to Dr. S. G. Wilson, "Baha is very God of very God."<sup>72</sup> This language is rivaled by an American writer who speaks of Baha as "the Manifested God himself,"<sup>73</sup> as also by the writer who affirms, "Baha Ullah is the trainer of the whole universe; his teachings are the cause of the life of the worlds, the unity and harmony of the crea-

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<sup>69</sup>Beha Ullah, Preface, p. ix.

<sup>70</sup>Pp. 477, 478.

<sup>71</sup>A Year Amongst the Persians, pp. 491, 492.

<sup>72</sup>Bahaism and its Claims, p. 36.

<sup>73</sup>C. M. Remey, Star of the West, March 2, 1913; The Bahai Movement, p. 43.

tures."<sup>74</sup> Extraordinary as such forms of statement may be rated, they appear not to be without foundation in the terms used by the subject himself whom they were designed to glorify. He once summoned—so Abdul Baha reports—two men who had engaged in a heated dispute. "To the one he said: 'You say that I am God, and that there is no other. You are right.' To the other he said, 'You say that I am but the reflection of God, You are right.' Then to both he said: 'You are both right. But to contend will destroy you both. Go home and be friends.'"<sup>75</sup> The divine title, which in this instance was not rejected, may be regarded as arrogated in another and more significant relation. In the letter which he addressed to the pope Baha Ullah included these words: "The breath of God is diffused throughout the world, because the Desired One has come in his most great glory. . . . The Father hath come, and that which hath been promised unto you in the kingdom is accomplished. . . . This is indeed the Father, whereof Isaiah gave you tidings, and the Comforter whom the Spirit (that is, Christ) promised."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Isabella D. Brittingham, *The Revelation of Baha Ullah*, pp. 32, 33.

<sup>75</sup>Phelps, *Life and Teaching of Abdul Baha*, pp. 135, 136.

<sup>76</sup>Text as given by Kheiralla, *Beha Ullah*, pp. 533-537.

We do not question that some Bahais prefer to speak of Baha Ullah as rather a mirror or manifestation of God than an incarnation of God. But the proof is quite adequate that a tendency was rapidly developed to apply the divine name to him without any specified limitation. Moreover, in Bahai references there are often associated with the term "Manifestation" qualities or endowments which pass quite out of sight of ordinary human measures.

Reference has been made by one or another reviewer to the complex role assigned to Baha Ullah. His disclosure has been identified in one instance with the manifestation of the Father, in another with the return of Christ, in a third with the advent of the Comforter.<sup>77</sup> In his letter to the pope, Baha Ullah himself claimed the double character of the Father and the Comforter. The confusion is made all the more striking when account is taken of the acknowledgment that the Comforter came in Mohammed and that Christ returned in Abdul Baha. By what makeshift Bahais would care to attempt a reconciliation of these conflicting representations, we cannot imagine, unless it be an appeal to the misty notion of the substantial identity of the successive Manifestations. One exposition of this identity runs

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<sup>77</sup>Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, pp. 311, 312,

as follows: "From the purely spiritual viewpoint the Bahais regard all the prophets as the same, because of the one eternal, unchangeable truth which they, one and all, manifested; whereas, viewed from the human standpoint, these spiritual teachers are seen to be different personalities, giving different teachings and establishing different religious systems."<sup>78</sup>

In some relations Abdul Baha has been accorded simply the office of interpreting and giving practical effect to the teachings of his father. A part of the Bahai constituency has been inclined to insist that he is not entitled to transcend this function, or to figure as an oracle of revelation. But many, including the majority of American Bahais, have taken a larger view of his position and prerogatives. They have not hesitated to identify him with Christ in his second coming, and to magnify his authority in proportion to this high standing. Thus M. Abul Karim declares: "God appeared in the Bab as the Holy Ghost, in Baha as the Father, in Abbas [Abdul Baha] as his Son."<sup>79</sup> C. M. Remey writes: "Abdul Baha is the beloved son into whose hands has been intrusted the guidance of the people of

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<sup>78</sup>Remey, *The Bahai Movement*, p. 37.

<sup>79</sup>Cited by Wilson, *Bahaism and its Claims*, p. 40.

the kingdom. . . . He comes with the power of God to live and manifest the life of the kingdom."<sup>80</sup> "He is the Center of Guidance—the Center of the Covenant; therefore all must turn wholly and without reserve unto him. . . . The Center of the Covenant is the Divine physician to the world besides whom there is no other."<sup>81</sup> An equivalent estimate is rendered by P. K. Dealy in the declaration that Abdul Baha "is the Lord and Master of the Father's kingdom on this earth, the same one whom the Christian Church is looking for and expecting to come."<sup>82</sup>

Doubtless reference can be made to words of Abdul Baha in which he has disclaimed a title to the high ascriptions rendered to him. As a man of diplomatic gift he knew the value of not appearing, in certain environments, to claim too much. But he has also indicated that incense of a very extraordinary kind is not unwelcome. For example, he approved for publication an ode written by Thornton Chase in which he is glorified with such epithets as the following: "Thou Enlightener of the

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<sup>80</sup>The Bahai Movement, pp. 26, 27.

<sup>81</sup>Star of the West, September 8, 1913, p. 172; December 31, 1913, p. 274.

<sup>82</sup>The Dawn of Knowledge and the Most Great Peace, p. 32.

Spirits of Men! Thou Heart of the World! Thou Physician of Souls! Thou Prince of Peace! Thou Right Arm of the Mighty! Thou Lord of the Sabbath of Ages! Thou Sum of Spiritual and Human Perfections! Thou Mystery of God!"<sup>83</sup> The question naturally arises, how much further along this line Abdul Baha would need to have gone in order to assert the claim which his father made—for the next thousand years—the mark of an impostor.

It has often been thought that apotheosis is something which pertains to remote and uncritical ages. That it can occur in such a period as is inclosed in the later years of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth is clearly enough attested by the facts stated above.

#### V. THE IMPOTENCY OF BAHAIISM TO FULFILL ITS AMBITIOUS SCHEME

The expectation that their religion will soon make conquest of the world has not infrequently been given emphatic expression by Bahai propagandists. Occasionally, too, writers not affiliating with the religion have ascribed to it very large possibilities. In our

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<sup>83</sup>Star of the West, September 27, 1913, pp. 187, 183.



view there are substantial reasons for rating this highly colored prospect as fanciful and groundless. Indeed, it seems like paying excessive consideration to a hopeless cause to discuss the subject of world conquest by this religion. We deem it best, however, to record some definite reasons for ascribing only a very limited outlook to Bahai propagandism.

1. *The measure of success already gained promises no extraordinary advance.* The appreciable victory won in Persia by Babism (or Bahaism, to use the later name) is explained by special conditions. Among these was the fresh zeal enkindled by the conviction that at length the Imam, who had, for so many centuries, been the object of longing and expectation, had given sure tokens of his presence and agency. Men possessed by this conviction became ardent propagandists and were ready to engage in bold enterprises and to endure great sacrifices. So the movement spread with striking rapidity. But the heroic days being once over and the excitement cooled down, the means of advance were greatly curtailed, and Bahaism was brought to a relatively stationary condition. As has been stated, missionaries long in the field do not estimate its following in Persia above two hundred thousand. The number won in the rest of



the world is comparatively insignificant. Limiting the survey to the half century since Baha Ullah declared himself we can find no ground for legitimate boasting or confidence. Within that period Christianity has won in single missionary fields more converts than the probable totality of Bahai adherents at the present day. In the same time new-fangled religions, which have started up since the announcement of Baha Ullah, have gained larger constituencies than Bahaism numbers outside of the Persian domain. The measure of its success clearly promises no great victories in the future.

2. *The antecedents of Bahaism must operate as the reverse of a credential in the sight of a great part of the religious world.* Not merely did Bahaism issue from Mohammedanism, but it was so implicated with it as to be led to treat it as a necessary foundation. To the Mohammedan religion in general, and to the Shiite phase in particular, it assigned the character of unimpeachable manifestations of the divine will. It, indeed, acknowledged Christ and the Gospels, but not by any means as taking precedence of Mohammed and the Koran. The latter were placed on a parity with the former, or rather given a certain preeminence over them. The Bab, as has been

noticed, distinctly affirmed preeminence, and while he felt free to modify the regulations of the ancestral religion, he nevertheless took pains to claim for it perpetual recognition. "Whoever," he wrote, "denies Islam, Ullah will not accept from him any of his actions in the day of the resurrection."<sup>84</sup> Those who succeeded the Bab, as having their eyes directed to opportunities of propagandism in Christian lands, may not have been quite so outspoken; but in no wise have they curtailed the assumption of the divine origin and authority of Mohammedanism. They place Mohammed in the list of the great Manifestations, and by their theory of progressive advance in the series of divine messages, they carry the inference that a certain superiority must be accorded to the revelation of the Arabian Prophet over that of Jesus Christ. When, therefore, a Christian is asked to embrace Bahaim he is implicitly requested to rate his own religion below a parity with Mohammedanism. He is also asked to place the stamp of approval on the Shiite doctrine of the Imam. To neither of these demands can he consistently yield. He is forbidden to acquiesce in them not merely by sentiment,

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<sup>84</sup>Cited by Vatralsky, Mohammedan Gnosticism in America, p. 78.

but by unequivocal dictates of historical facts and rational considerations.

In placing Mohammed and his religion even on a parity with Christ and his religion Christendom would condemn itself to intellectual self-stultification. The personal record of Mohammed was demonstrably of a mixed character. Even the earlier part of his prophetic career, which recent historical criticism is largely inclined to regard as indicative of earnest conviction and straightforward religious purpose, does not appear unstained. It was a wretched compromise into which he was beguiled by his desire for outward success when he publicly declared that the veneration of the three goddesses recognized in the Meccan idolatry might be hoped for. If we suppose that his own conscience rather than the shame of his followers compelled the recall of this perverse message, it would not be a decisive proof against his general good intention at this stage, and would only show that he was liable to be overborne by temptation. But whatever chance there may be for a charitable judgment on this unhappy incident of his earlier career, it is quite impossible to invent a sane apology for various incidents and features of his later career. In claiming the sanction of divine revelation for unlimited

license for himself in the matter of wives, in resorting to a like sanction for marriage with Zainab, the divorced wife of his adopted son Zaid (divorced on purpose to accommodate his known lust for her), in appealing to the same high authority for the purpose of silencing murmurs in his harem over his liaison with the Coptic slave girl Mary<sup>85</sup>—in all this abject abasement of the office of revelation Mohammed showed either that he had become the helpless dupe of his own wishes, or else that he was ready to go to any length in the role of pious fraud which his convenience or pleasure might dictate. Add to these instances of burlesque on the idea of revelation his legalizing of robberies such as the lax code of his countrymen discountenanced—robberies of pilgrims on the way to Mecca; also his bringing of the captive Jewess Safia to his bed three days after the slaughter of her relatives in battle, in defiance of the decent custom which prescribed that an interval of three months should be granted to a captive thus bereaved; further his complete extermination of a Jewish tribe by the execution of all the men and the enslavement of all the women and children; weigh matters of this sort without bias, and who can consent to associate them with a

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<sup>85</sup>Koran, suras xxiii and lxvi.

prophet of God rather than with an egoist, a fanatic, or a combination of the two? The words which a judicial writer applies to the last ten years of Mohammed's career but express the verdict demanded by well-authenticated facts. "There can be no shadow of question," says D. B. Macdonald, "that in those last years he forged the awful machinery of divine inspiration to serve his own ignoble and selfish purpose."<sup>86</sup> Contrasting the confidence with which the Christian can appeal to Christ with the lack of security with which the believer in Islam can appeal back to Mohammed, he writes: "It is only when his figure is seen through the mist of tradition, surrounded by the awe and reverence of the unexamining, the uncritical, and the morally undeveloped, that there can be any thought of taking him as a religious guide and pattern for life."<sup>87</sup>

As it is impossible for intelligent Christians to be reconciled to the personal record of Mohammed, so it is quite inconceivable that they should be willing to place his religion, as authentically embodied in the Koran, on a parity with their own. The religious system reflects the limitations of its author, and falls much below the biblical level. Mohammed, to be sure, had a species of acquaintance

<sup>86</sup>Aspects of Islam, p. 74.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., pp. 110, 111.

with the biblical religion. It was, however, a mutilated secondhand acquaintance, and was far from amounting to authentic knowledge. Oral, legendary, heretical, and apocryphal sources supplied him with such materials as he utilized. Possibly, as some writers have judged, especially on the basis of Suras xxii and xxiv, he may have been acquainted with the Second Epistle of Peter,<sup>88</sup> but, generally speaking, it is perfectly evident that he had no real knowledge of the canonical Scriptures. The proof lies in the character of the matter which he appropriated and in the glaring misplacement and misconstruction of facts in which he indulged. In connection with the Old Testament history the material upon which he laid hold was of the nature of post-canonical traditions and legends. About one fourth of the entire Koran consists of late Jewish haggadah or saint lore. His citations from the New Testament sphere are largely suggestive of the spurious Gospels of the Infancy of Jesus and of the tenets of Oriental Gnosticism. To indicate the quality of his strange dealing with the facts of religious history, it may be noted that he placed Haman back in the time of Pharaoh;<sup>89</sup> identified

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<sup>88</sup>Hubert Grimme, Mohammed, Theil II, p. 33.

<sup>89</sup>Koran, xl, 25.



Mary, the mother of Jesus, with Miriam, the sister of Aaron and Moses;<sup>90</sup> and imputed to Christians the acknowledgment of Mary as one of the Persons of the Trinity.<sup>91</sup> It has been concluded also by many interpreters that he made the angel Gabriel and the Holy Spirit one and the same agent.<sup>92</sup> Quite in line with Gnostic Docetism he reduced the crucifixion to a deceptive appearance.<sup>93</sup> In short, his acquaintance with the biblical religion amounted simply to an incidental contact with a debased version. He could not and did not use the biblical content in any adequate way as a basis of his own system. In cardinal particulars his system falls distinctly below the biblical plane, and especially below the level of its outcome in the New Testament revelation.

Giving a partial illustration of the relative inferiority of the Koranic system we notice in the first place its one-sided stress on the sovereignty of God. Its reference to the mercy or compassion of God is mostly in a recurring formal phrase and is not adapted to give any vivid impression of this attribute. In representations which effectively picture the nearness, tenderness, and love of God, it is barren

<sup>90</sup>Koran, iii, 31, xix, 28-35, lxvi, 12.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., v. 79, 116.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., xvi, 104.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., iv, 156.



as compared with the Bible. In numerous instances divine sovereignty is described in terms which identify it with crushing, relentless, arbitrary might. Nothing better surely can be discovered in such declarations as these respecting God: "He forgives whom he will, and punishes whom he will, for he is mighty over all."<sup>94</sup> "We have created for hell many of the jinn and of mankind."<sup>95</sup> "It is not for any person to believe save by the permission of God; he puts horror on those who have no sense."<sup>96</sup> "God leads whom he will astray, and guides whom he will."<sup>97</sup> "He pardons whom he pleases, and torments whom he pleases."<sup>98</sup>

Doubtless sentences of a different tenor, or such as presume upon human freedom, are contained in the Koran. But they do not counterbalance the impression of arbitrary might which is stamped upon its pages. Moreover, on the principle of Mohammedan exegesis, that in case of contradictory representations the later cancel the earlier, it is not certain that the acknowledgments of human freedom can be counted authoritative. These, according to Hubert Grimme, belong to the early Meccan period in Mohammed's career,

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., ii, 284, v, 21.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., vii, 178.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., x, 100.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., xiv, 4, xxxv, 9.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., xlviii, 14.

whereas the strong statements which reduce men to the rank of helpless instruments or playthings of almighty power were penned in his later years.<sup>99</sup>

In rather striking correspondence with his later stress on divine arbitrariness, Mohammed came to exalt the sword as an instrument of religious propagandism, and thus fell far below the plane of New Testament teaching, whatever may be said of certain chapters in the Old Testament. The Koran not merely permits, but commands, bloody violence against unbelievers up to the point of their surrender to the demands of Mohammedan authority. The orders run thus: "When the sacred months are passed away, kill the idolaters wherever ye may find them, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in every place of observation."<sup>100</sup> "O ye who believe fight those who are near to you of the misbelievers, and let them find in you sternness; and know that God is with those who fear."<sup>101</sup> "When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter among them; and bind them in bonds; and either give them a free dismissal afterward, or exact a ransom until the war shall have

<sup>99</sup>Cited by Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, p. 94.

<sup>100</sup>Koran, ix, 5.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., ix, 124.

laid down its arms.”<sup>102</sup> It may be admitted that the scheme ordained for Arabia was not prescribed in its full rigor to outside countries. But military conquest of those countries for the sake of religion—for the sake of extending Mohammedan dominion, and so for the ultimate purpose of extending Mohammedan religion—was an integral part of the regime which the Arabian Prophet bequeathed to his followers.<sup>103</sup> The arbitrary God and the forcible propagation of religion stand out as companion features in his teaching.

One further ground of radical objection to the system of Mohammed must be awarded a brief mention. It distinctly legalizes polygamy, concubinage, and facility of divorce. As has been indicated, the Prophet through a special revelation set aside all restrictions for himself as respects the number of his wives and concubines.<sup>104</sup> The rest of the faithful he restricted to four wives, but put them on a parity with himself in leaving them free to take any number of concubines.<sup>105</sup> As regards divorce, the husband was armed with autocratic power, the wife left without resource

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., xlvii, 4-7.

<sup>103</sup>Compare Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, p. 25.

<sup>104</sup>Koran, xxxiii, 48, 49.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., iv, 3, 29, lxx, 30.

against his caprice.<sup>106</sup> The husband was even licensed to use physical violence against the wife. The professedly infallible code has this prescription: "Those whose perverseness ye fear, admonish them, and remove them into bed-chambers and beat them."<sup>107</sup> It is unnecessary to add that it would involve a long stretch of debasement for a Christian consciousness, which has been developed on the basis of the New Testament, to descend to the plane of these features of the teaching of Mohammed.

As was noticed at the beginning of this topic, an examination of Mohammed and his system is relevant, not simply because Bahaism issued therefrom, but because it demands, in virtue of its fundamental conception of the scheme of revelation, that they should be recognized either as being on a parity with Christ and his teaching, or—as is more or less openly taught in various instances—having a certain preeminence over them. The discussion is designed to emphasize the truth that Christians as a body must decisively reject this demand. It is a perfectly insuperable barrier in the way of a rational acquiescence in Bahaism.

It remains to touch briefly on the antecedent furnished by the Shiite doctrine of the

<sup>106</sup>Koran, ii, 228, 229, xxxiii, 47-51.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., iv, 36.

Imam. Of course there is no basis for this doctrine in so far as the divine right of Mohammedanism is subject to challenge. The special phase loses necessarily all authority when the foundation is taken away from the general system to which it belongs. But even if Mohammedanism in its general scope could be approved, it would by no means follow that the Shiite notion of the Imam has any legitimacy. It is in truth fanciful, arbitrary, and improbable. One can, indeed, sympathize in a measure with the Shiite grief over the hard fate of Ali and his progeny. However, the claim set up for them to an indefeasible right to headship over the faithful has no good basis. The Imam is conceived to rule as the successor of the Prophet Mohammed. His office, whatever other aspect it may include, is largely in the religious and prophetic order. Now religious competency and prophetic gift are not matters of inheritance. They do not travel down a particular line of physical descent. The scheme based on the assumption that they can be held to such a line is mechanical and arbitrary. A mediæval pope, even under an elective system, was none too faithful in conserving the spiritual interests of Christendom. What would a papacy be under a system which made the high office descend

by incontrovertible right from father to son? The Shiite contention lies outside of rational sanction, and therefore outside of all probability of divine approval. It follows, inasmuch as Babism originated from the Shiite claim respecting the Imam, and Bahaism ranks as a modified version of Babism, that Bahaism rests on a fanciful and illegitimate foundation. The Bab's relation to the Imam being in all probability apocryphal, there is no proper defense against rating the mission of Baha Ullah, who accounted the Bab his fore-runner, as likewise apocryphal.

3. *Bahaism has no sacred oracles fitted to compete with the Christian Scriptures.* Mohammed appealed to the style and matter of the Koran as the great and sufficient credential for his divine mission. Herein he furnished a precedent which both the Bab and Baha Ullah thought it worth while to follow. In their unique ability in composition they claimed to have proof that they were called of God and furnished by him for an extraordinary work.

What does an examination of their writings reveal? It shows that they were not the peers even of Mohammed, and much less the peers of the leading biblical writers. In literary style and fullness of spiritual dynamic the



best in the Koran falls much below the best of the Bible, while passages in the latter which exhibit high excellence vastly outnumber those to be found in the former. Doubtless the style of Mohammed exhibits a masculine vigor and testifies to a certain native genius. He was, however, much too boastful of his gift. The "incomparable Koran" might conceivably have been much better in respect of perspicuity, avoidance of wearisome repetition, and in various features of literary style, to say nothing about the quality of the matter. With still larger warrant his would-be successors in the nineteenth century can be taken to task for their boasting of a transcendent gift in composition. The unfavorable comment which the earliest Western reviewer, Gobineau, pronounced on the style of the Bab,<sup>108</sup> has been repeated by other competent investigators. The matter of the Bayan is encased in a thoroughly artificial framework, and considerable parts of it are so obscure as greatly to embarrass interpretation. That it should have fallen so speedily into neglect, together with other writings from the same source, may not have been altogether due to the fault of the Bab as a writer; but the fact of

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<sup>108</sup>Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale, p. 147.



disuse is more or less of a testimony to the lack of attractive qualities. Baha Ullah had a somewhat better gift of literary production. Moreover, in the course of his much longer career he had opportunity to gain a wider acquaintance with the treasures of religious thought in the world. In contrast with Mohammed he had some real acquaintance with the New Testament. It is possible to collect from his writings a considerable list of sentences which are penetrated with excellent religious sentiment.<sup>109</sup> But maxims quite as elevated in sentiment and expressed in finer style can be found in the Sufi literature and in the Buddhist scriptures, to say nothing about the abundant store in the Christian Bible. Moreover, there is very much in the productions of Baha Ullah that is deserving of scanty praise. He often lends his pen to rhapsody, to a cloying luxuriance, to obscure if not unmeaning collocations of words, to a style of expression to be described as rather fulsome than either chaste or energetic. Taken in its general cast his writing is in no wise comparable, as respects universal adaptation,

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<sup>109</sup>An appreciable fraction of these is accessible in translations from the Persian by Dreyfus under the title, *Les préceptes du Bé haisme, Les Ornaments, Les Paroles du Paradis, Les Splendeurs*, Paris, 1906.

to the discourses of Jesus. It is inconceivable that it could ever approach in practical power to the ecumenical speech of the Son of man. There is, furthermore, a deficit as concerns a definite ascertainable canon. So far as we have been able to discover, no one has presented an authoritative list of the Bahai scriptures. The writings of Baha Ullah—consisting largely of “tablets” or epistles—make a collection to which as yet exact dimensions cannot be attributed, in which logical consecution is sadly lacking, and to go over which must greatly weary anyone who is not already a convinced and enthusiastic devotee. The book which more than any other is the Bible of the Bahais, the *Kitab-i-Akdas*, contains, it is true, in moderate compass, a considerable body of teachings, but its contents are badly arranged. With an overplus of positive rules it conjoins thoroughly heterogeneous materials. That Bahaists themselves have no great confidence in its power of appeal is indicated by their singular backwardness in giving it to the public in translated form. In fine, there is no substantial reason for supposing that the sacred literature of Bahaism has any real ability to compete with the Christian Bible.

Reference was made to efforts to accredit

the Bahai revelation by finding in its leading agents and events the fulfillment of various biblical forecasts. What is appropriate here is to indicate more specifically the worthlessness of this expedient. It is quite futile as resting on arbitrary and incredible assumptions. In the first place, in assuming that Old and New Testament prophecies apply preeminently to a Mohammedan domain Bahai interpretation carries the prophets into a field entirely foreign to their knowledge and interest. This violent diremption of premonition from a historical ground must be repudiated by a sober biblical criticism. In the second place, the Bahai application of the prophecies is discredited by all the evidence which demonstrates the superiority of Christ and the New Testament to Mohammed and the Koran. The prophetic ideals in their loftiness and wealth must be regarded as linked with the higher line of developments, not with the lower in which they receive no adequate fulfillment. In the third place, the exegesis of the Bahai apologists is vitiated by its premise on the legitimacy of the Shiite doctrine of the Imam, a doctrine which has been shown to be too artificial to deserve any credence. Why should Old Testament or New Testament prophecy be supposed to authenticate the

mission of the Bab, the mission of a "Gate" to an apocryphal entity styled the Imam? Finally the Bahai dealing with the biblical prophecies is in its details a piece of fanciful and aberrant construction. It is subject to the same criticisms which apply to the radical Adventism from which it has so largely borrowed.<sup>110</sup> For instance, like their Christian predecessors, the Bahai interpreters turn the "days" of prophecy into "years" wherever it suits their theories to intrude long periods. For this procedure there is no proper biblical warrant. The forms of expression in Numbers xiv. 34 and Ezekiel iv. 4-6, which have been cited in its behalf, do not apply. "In the first of these passages no symbolical import is attached to the 'days,' the statement being that the rebellious Israelites should be punished as many years as it took days to spy out the land of Canaan; and in the second passage it is formally stated that the days employed by the prophet in passing through a certain role should be typical of years of national experience. In neither passage is there a hint that it was a habit of biblical writers to use days, without note or explanation, as symbolical of years." Nothing but

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<sup>110</sup>See the author's *Studies in Recent Adventism*, especially pp. 100-113.

the convenience of the advocate who has made a diagram of history, and wants large numbers to bridge over correspondingly large intervals, is at the basis of this style of interpretation. As on this point the apologists of Bahaism imitate the fanciful construction of radical Adventism, so also in respect of an arbitrary choice of starting-points for their reckoning. Since the selected numbers must end at a year which marks an era in the origin or progress of Bahaism, they must be made to begin where the length of the intervals requires. Abdul Baha furnishes a striking illustration.<sup>111</sup> "He explains Daniel viii. 14 by taking the *solar* year. He calculates that the twenty-three hundred days were completed at the Bab's manifestation in 1844. In Daniel xii. 6 [7] the *lunar* year is resorted to, and the forty-two months (twelve hundred and sixty years) are dated from the hejira of Mohammed, but Daniel xii. 11 does not come exactly right. so the terminus *a quo* is made to be the prophet-hood of Mohammed, three years after his mission, which was ten years before the hejira. By this means the date of Baha's manifestation (1863) is reached."<sup>112</sup>

Evidently, the attempt of Bahaism to utilize

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<sup>111</sup>Some Answered Questions, pp. 49-52.

<sup>112</sup>Wilson, Bahaism and its Claims, pp. 98, 99.

biblical prophecy as a support to its own revelation is an utter miscarriage. That so responsible a representative as Abdul Baha should have engaged in the abortive procedure must be regarded as the reverse of a commendation of the cause which he attempted to bolster up.

4. *The personalities placed at the front by Bahaism lack the needful power of appeal.* Under this proposition there is little occasion to consider Mirza Ali Mohammed, the Bab. As respects his personal traits, there may be some ground for the judgment that they compared favorably with those of his ambitious successors; but they cannot be regarded as vitally affecting the chances of successful propagandism of Bahaism. He has practically been retired from a place of leadership in the religion which he started. As ultimately disposed the responsible leadership of Bahaism was concentrated in Baha Ullah. In a secondary degree the headship passed on to Abdul Baha. He did not, it is true, formally claim the right to make additions to the revelations given by his father; but in assuming to be an authoritative interpreter of those revelations he grasped a function of no small practical significance. As has been indicated, some of his followers have asserted for him the rank of the returning Christ, the Son of God.



Whatever Baha Ullah may have been in respect of personal characteristics, he has not been effectively presented, and apparently cannot be so presented, to the world at large. The dramatic seclusion which he cultivated at Acre, or during substantially the whole of his prophetic career, was not at all calculated to visualize him to the public. The pilgrims who, after removing their shoes, were ushered into his presence in small groups, may have been rather deeply impressed by his appearance and demeanor. But no means were provided for giving wide diffusion to any vital impression, supposing such to have been made upon individual visitors. As compared with the manifold scenes of the Gospel narratives, which work perennially with marvelous virtue to project the image of the historical Christ and to bring human hearts into captivity to him, Baha Ullah appears as a vague, distant, and powerless figure. For men in general it is impossible to feel that in viewing his career they are contemplating a real drama. Unavoidably there arises a suggestion of a piece of acting, of an attempt to function in a role that does not fit the subject. And this suggestion is distinctly aggravated by the discovery that the man who swathed himself in measureless claims could implicitly sanction for



his own glorification such a perversion of history as is given us in the Traveller's Narrative,<sup>113</sup> or assert for himself a license in respect of wives (or concubines) which was disallowed to Babis and Bahais in general. In the face of all this a few happy ventures in prediction cannot carry any appreciable weight. Men of discernment do not feel compelled to approve the whole program of Savonarola because he gave utterance to certain forecasts which were followed by apparent fulfillment. Still less will they be inclined, on a similar basis, to recognize the stamp of a divine sanction on the high claims of Baha Ullah.

Considerations which nullify the influence or discredit the claims of Baha Ullah reflect, of course, on the vocation of the official upholder and propagandist of those claims. There is but scanty occasion, therefore, to estimate the person or the career of Abdul Baha. The most pertinent remark is perhaps that which emphasizes the relative ineffectiveness of the publicity which he cultivated. Apparently, it has not been able to work any better results than the seclusion of his father. His suavity, running out into an easygoing latitudinarianism which invited almost every party to

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<sup>113</sup>Browne, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1892, pp. 306, 665,

flatter itself with the assumption that it had the essentials of the truth, was not ballasted by a sufficient exhibition of depth and energy of spirit to make profound or lasting impressions. His pilgrimage to the West naturally elicited considerable attention, but this testified rather to curiosity than to real interest. His visit won no substantial advance to his cause. Indeed, some who had been inclined to a favorable judgment were turned by a closer acquaintance with the chief exponent of Bahaism into indifference or opposition.

5. *The good points in Bahaism are largely negatived by association with highflying and incredible assumptions of authority.* The proposition as stated implies that commendable points are contained in the teaching of Bahaism. This is cordially to be admitted. Baha Ullah was sufficiently acquainted with Christianity in its oracles and in some of its better products in the modern world to be able in one respect and another to rise distinctly above the ordinary plane of Mohammedanism. His theory of government was not illiberal, for he found in it a place for republicanism as well as for monarchy, and indicated his conviction that an ideal combination of the two is possible. In respect of religion, his judgment that it will be advantaged by restricting

to a moderate compass elements of ceremonialism and sacerdotalism is not ill-grounded and accords with the sentiment of a great multitude of thoughtful Christians. Once more, his opposition to the policy of settling disputes by appeals to force and his emphasis on the establishment of international tribunals to take cognizance of matters threatening to rend the peace of nations may properly command general appreciation. Points like these are to be gratefully recognized. They are not, however, to be recognized with such a degree of acclaim or laudation as to evoke the notion that they are new or unprecedented. Bahai apologists have sometimes gone astray in this direction. They have boasted, for example, of Baha Ullah's peace policy and scheme for arbitration tribunals, as though he were a pioneer in this matter and had brought a brand new plan to the attention of Christendom. The facts are distinctly otherwise. A project of federation in the interest of peace is as old as the time of Henry IV of France. In 1625 Hugo Grotius published his book *On the Rights of War and of Peace*, in which the customary readiness of nations to plunge into war was strongly denounced, and a noble plea was made for arbitration. In the same century George Fox was an insistent advocate of a

peace policy, and the Society of Friends which he founded has ever been devoted to the same policy. Toward the end of the eighteenth century the philosopher Kant, in his tractate on Perpetual Peace, advocated a comprehensive scheme of federation for the preservation of friendly relations between all peoples. The Massachusetts Peace Society was organized in 1815, and the American Peace Society held its first meeting in 1828. An International Peace Congress was convened in 1843, and by 1851 five such congresses had been gathered.<sup>114</sup> All this development preceded the mission of Baha Ullah; and if he did not derive any suggestion from it, the explanation does not lie in any intrinsic impossibility.

The above facts are cited simply as a corrective to intemperate laudation. In itself the peace policy of Bahaism, whether original or borrowed, is a praiseworthy feature. The point of emphasis in the present connection is the impotency to which it is condemned. On grounds of reason, interest, and humanity the nations may ultimately be constrained to substitute the rational appeal to arbitration for the irrational resort to violence. But they will never do so at the beck of an authority exalting itself above all principalities and

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<sup>114</sup> Selected Quotations on Peace and War, 1915, pp. 312-355.

powers and claiming unqualified right to direct them according to its behests. An intermeddling theocracy set up at Acre, and attempting to perpetuate itself through any sort of tribunal, must of necessity, through the antipathy which it could not fail to provoke, render the reverse of a true service to any great public interest. The element of intolerable pretense would negate the virtue of any good intention which might be joined with the exorbitant and incredible claims.

6. *The Bahai code must repel, in part by its inferior level, and in part by its artificialities.* In the licensing of bigamy that code adopts a point of view which the Christian consciousness has unequivocally outlawed. The monogamic ideal which shines out in the Old Testament, in spite of the unhappy departures from it in practice, the language of Christ relative to marriage, and, above all, the necessary inductions from the principles of the New Testament respecting the intrinsic relations of believers, have put the system of a plurality of wives under a sentence of irrepealable reprobation. Only by an unthinkable lapse from decisive habits of thought and feeling could Christendom come to tolerate a scheme which compels a woman to take up with the fraction of a husband. At this point, there-

fore, Bahaism has raised an effectual barrier against possible advance on any large scale within the domain occupied by Christianity. Its licensing of bigamy links it with an imperfect past and causes it to face rather toward obsolescence than toward increase. A kindred remark applies to the law on divorce, previously cited from the *Kitab-i-Akdas*, which treats the subject from the standpoint of the husband's prerogative, and virtually denies the parity of the wife.

The license for a plurality of wives which is given by the Bahai code naturally suggests a reference to another feature. In the *Kitab-i-Akdas* a relatively light penalty is attached to the crime of adultery. It is made punishable with a fine both for a first and a second offense, whereas theft entails successively exile, imprisonment, and branding, and arson makes liable to burning.

Both in original Babism and in Bahaism there is noticeable a failure to stop with the enumeration of principles, and various trivialities and artificialities are treated as matters of religious obligation. The Bab, attaching a magic power to names and numbers, assigned a great role to talismans.<sup>115</sup> Under the influence of the same incentive he undertook to

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<sup>115</sup>Gobineau, pp. 336ff.



revolutionize the method of reckoning time. Recognizing that one of the foremost titles of God (*wahed*) is composed of letters whose numerical value amounts to nineteen, he ordained that the year should consist of nineteen months, each month of nineteen days, each day of nineteen hours, each hour of nineteen minutes. Though this scheme was so faulty that it became necessary to patch out the year by the addition of four or five days, it was nevertheless, as has been observed, given the stamp of authority by Baha Ullah. Now, a freak in legislation like this, if not extremely significant in itself, has still a portentous bearing. Supposing that the nations of the earth could be persuaded to accept this specific expression of foolish and aberrant sovereignty, we cannot rationally believe that they would care to submit in general to an authority that has demonstrated its capability of running to such an excess of arbitrariness and artificiality.

7. *The license which Bahaism grants to its adherents to march under false banners is far from being a recommendation.* The motive on the part of the Bahais in Persia for dissembling their faith is intelligible enough. By outward accommodation to the current Mohammedanism they greatly abridge the liability to be



assailed by violent persecution. The policy adopted is not, however, heroic, nor can it tend to fashion men imbued with a proper sense of the supremacy over heart and conduct which is due to truth. A lowering of moral tone in certain directions must naturally result. It is not a ground for surprise, therefore, that a resident should render this testimony respecting the Persian Babis (or Bahais): "Their hospitality, zeal, and earnestness in the propagation of their belief are worthy of praise and emulation; but their easy dissimulation of their faith, even to openly cursing the Babis, and the unreliability of their promises are discouraging."<sup>116</sup>

Whatever degree of charity may be exercised toward the dissimulation of the Persian Bahais, in consideration of their difficult situation, it is not possible to judge mildly of a kindred policy in domains where religious liberty obtains. The dispensation of Baha Ullah claims supereminence over all others. It unmistakably relegates Christ to a secondary rank, so that no one can consistently figure as a Christian who has given his allegiance to Bahaism. When, therefore, Abdul Baha advised converts to remain in the Christian

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<sup>116</sup>J. L. Potter, cited by Speer, *Missions and Modern History*, I, 162.

Church and to spread their views there,<sup>117</sup> he was encouraging a course which clear-sighted moral integrity must reprobate.

It is not our intention to deny that some very worthy maxims and principles have been adopted by the responsible exponents of Bahaism. The ground of impeachment of the religion bearing that name is the vast disparity between its enormous claims and its real credentials. The conclusion is unavoidable that it has no substantial basis. To suppose that it can ever figure as a great world religion is to indulge in a gratuitous fancy.

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<sup>117</sup>Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, p. 97.



## INDEX



## INDEX

- Abdul Baha (otherwise Abbas Effendi), 287ff., 292f., 296ff., 318ff., 340, 343f., 350f.
- Absolute, the, 17, 20, 23, 42f., 57f., 112.
- Absolution, the rite of, 177, 179.
- Agrippa of Nettesheim, 228.
- Aid to a Grammar of Assent, Newman's book, 212ff.
- Aliotta, A., 70, 100.
- Angelus Silesius, 228, 264.
- Anti-sacerdotalism, of the Protestant reformers, 174ff.
- Aquinas, Thomas, 162.
- Assurance, doctrine of, 159ff.
- Augustine, 239.
- Babism, 275f., 279, 281, 283, 295.
- Baha Ullah, 275, 279, 282ff., 291ff., 314ff., 336f., 342f., 349.
- Bahaism, antecedents, 275ff.; historical sketch, 280ff.; doctrines, 290ff.; the position accorded to Baha Ullah and to Abdul Baha, 314ff.; barriers in the way of any large advance, 320ff.
- Barney, Laura C., 292f., 297ff., 305f.
- Bawden, H. H., 43, 52, 109.
- Bellarmino, R., 168, 170.
- Bergson, H., 43, 69ff., 109ff.
- Bernard of Clairvaux, 239.
- Berthelot, R., 70.
- Bible, its primacy in the view of the Protestant reformers, 166ff.; Newman's opinion as respects inerrancy, 202.
- Billot, L., 168, 179.
- Boehme, J., 228, 247.
- Bonaventura, 267.
- Boniface VIII, 183.
- Bowne, B. P., 29.
- Brahman, 16ff., 24ff., 30f., 230.
- Brooks, Phillips, 150.
- Browne, E. G., 277, 279f., 286f., 299, 307f., 315, 317.
- Brownson, O. A., 195.
- Buddhism, 230.
- Caird, J., 22.
- Calvin, J., 160, 182.
- Canus, Melchior, 168.
- Carr, H. W., 69, 82, 91, 110.
- Categories, the, 59, 95.
- Catherine of Genoa, 245.
- Catherine of Siena, 245.
- Chase, T., 305, 319f.
- Coleridge, S. T., 174.
- Cousin, V., 226.
- Cunningham, G. W., 71, 94.
- De Soto, 170.
- Development, doctrinal, as construed by Newman, 193ff., 204ff.
- Dewey, J., 39f., 43, 45ff., 54.
- Dionysius, the Areopagite, 233, 258, 261.
- Doctrines, rating of, 147ff.

- Dodson, G. R., 72.  
 Dreyfus, H., 311, 336.  
 Duration, in sense of Bergson, 82ff.  
 Eckhart, 240, 259, 261, 263f.  
 Edwards, Jonathan, 252f.  
 Elliott, H. S. R., 71.  
 Emerson, R. W., 256f.  
 Erigena, John Scot, 259.  
 Evolution, in sense of Bergson, 86ff.  
 Fairbairn, A. M., 216.  
 Fénelon, F. de la M., 249.  
 Fichte, J. G., 255f.  
 Fischer, K., 32.  
 Flint, R., 139.  
 Foster, G. B., 108.  
 Fouillée, A. J. E., 70.  
 Francis, de Sales, 247f.  
 Francis of Assisi, 229.  
 Freedom, as construed by Bergson, 90, 103.  
 Gerrard, T. J., 101f.  
 Gladstone, W. E., 198, 210.  
 Gobineau, Le Comte de, 234, 307, 335, 348.  
 God, pantheistic view of, 13ff.; regarded as limited and changing, 55f., 103f., 107ff.  
 Goldziher, I., 330f.  
 Green, T. H., 140f.  
 Gregory of Nyssa, 223.  
 Grimme, H., 327, 329.  
 Grotius, Hugo, 345.  
 Guyon, Madame, 249f.  
 Heraclitus, 41.  
 Hermann, E., 72.  
 Hibben, J. G., 98.  
 Hilton, W., 243.  
 Höfding, H., 107f., 110f., 117.  
 Horne, H. H., 63.  
 Hume, David, 138ff.  
 Illusion, as affirmed by the Vedanta philosophy, 17, 23ff.  
 Imamate, 275, 332ff., 333f.  
 Indulgences, 158f.  
 Inge, W. R., 226.  
 Intuition, in sense of Bergson, 74ff., 93ff.  
 Isvara, 19.  
 Jalaluddin Rumi, 233.  
 James, W., 39ff., 70, 72, 109, 121ff., 142, 215.  
 John of the Cross, 246.  
 Jones, R. M., 226.  
 Juliana of Norwich, 243.  
 Justification, the Reformation doctrine of, 152ff.  
 Kallen, H. M., 74, 92.  
 Kant, Immanuel, 346.  
 Kheiralla, I. G., 286, 288f., 296f., 305f., 309, 314f.  
 King, H. C., 226.  
 Kingsley, C., 227.  
 Koran, the, 326ff., 335.  
 Ladd, G. T., 71.  
 Lao-tse, 231.  
 Lasson, A., 226.  
 Law, W., 251.  
 Le Roy, E., 69, 89.  
 Lehmann, E., 226.  
 Leo XIII., 168, 184, 192f., 211.  
 Liberatore, M., 184.  
 Lindsay, A. D., 82.  
 Luther, Martin, 152ff., 238.  
 Macdonald, D. B., 326.  
 Mach, E., 121, 130ff.  
 Malou, J. B., 170.  
 Manning, H. E., 184, 189.  
 Maritain, J., 92.  
 Mary, the Virgin, 194, 196, 200, 205f.  
 Matter, in sense of Bergson, 88ff., 101f.



- Maya, 17, 30.  
 Metaphysics, rating of, 41, 48, 51, 121.  
 Mill, J. S., 141.  
 Mirza Ali Mohammed, the Bab, 278, 280ff., 286f., 300, 314, 335, 341, 348f.  
 Modernism, 201, 218f.  
 Mohammed, judged by his record, 324ff.  
 Mohammedanism, the Bahai claims for it tested, 325ff.  
 Molinos, M., 248.  
 Moore, A. W., 47ff.  
 More, H., 250.  
 Münsterberg, H., 63.  
 Mysticism, scope of the term, 223f.; various definitions, 224ff.; the type concerned with nature, 227ff.; the type concerned with inner experience, 230ff.; grounds for appreciation, 234ff.; prominent Christian representatives, 238ff.; exposures to error, 257ff.  
 Neo-Platonism, 232f., 258.  
 Nettleship, R. L., 227.  
 Newman, J. H., 189ff.  
 Nicolas, A. L. M., 300, 310, 314.  
 Oecolampadius, J., 182.  
 Orphists, the, 232.  
 Overton, J. H., 226.  
 Palmer, G. H., 143.  
 Pantheism, 13ff., 234, 256, 262ff., 293f.  
 Paracelsus, T., 228.  
 Patmore, C., 226.  
 Perrone, J., 170, 194.  
 Pfeiderer, O., 226.  
 Phelps, M., 284, 293f., 307, 351.  
 Phillips, G., 183.  
 Pierce, C. S., 39.  
 Pius IX., 184, 198.  
 Pius X., 212, 218.  
 Plato, 41, 232.  
 Plotinus, 232f., 258, 268.  
 Powell, E. E., 20, 22.  
 Pragmatism, 39ff.  
 Pratt, J. B., 226.  
 Proclus, 233.  
 Protagoras, 41.  
 Purcell, E. S., 183f., 189.  
 Quesnel, Pasquier, 172.  
 Rageot, G., 70.  
 Ranke, L. von, 183.  
 Récéjac, E., 226.  
 Reformation, the, its contributions, 147ff.  
 Remey, C. M., 300, 301f., 315, 318f.  
 Richard of St. Victor, 266.  
 Roberts, B. H., 56.  
 Roemer, H., 280.  
 Roman Catholicism, its doctrine relative to justification, 157ff.; to assurance, 161ff.; to the function of the Bible, 169ff.; to priestly prerogatives, 179f., 183ff.  
 Ross, E. D., 284, 303.  
 Royce, J., 71.  
 Ruysbroeck, J., 243, 259, 261, 264.  
 Sacraments, theory of the, 177ff.  
 Saint-Martin, L. C. de, 229.  
 Sankara, 15ff., 23f.  
 Santayana, G., 71, 80.  
 Scheeben, M. J., 168, 172.  
 Schelling, F. W. J., 229.  
 Schiller, F. C. S., 39ff.  
 Sell, E., 298.  
 Seth, A., 140.  
 Shastri, Prahu Dutt, 17f.  
 Shiites, the, 275ff., 281.

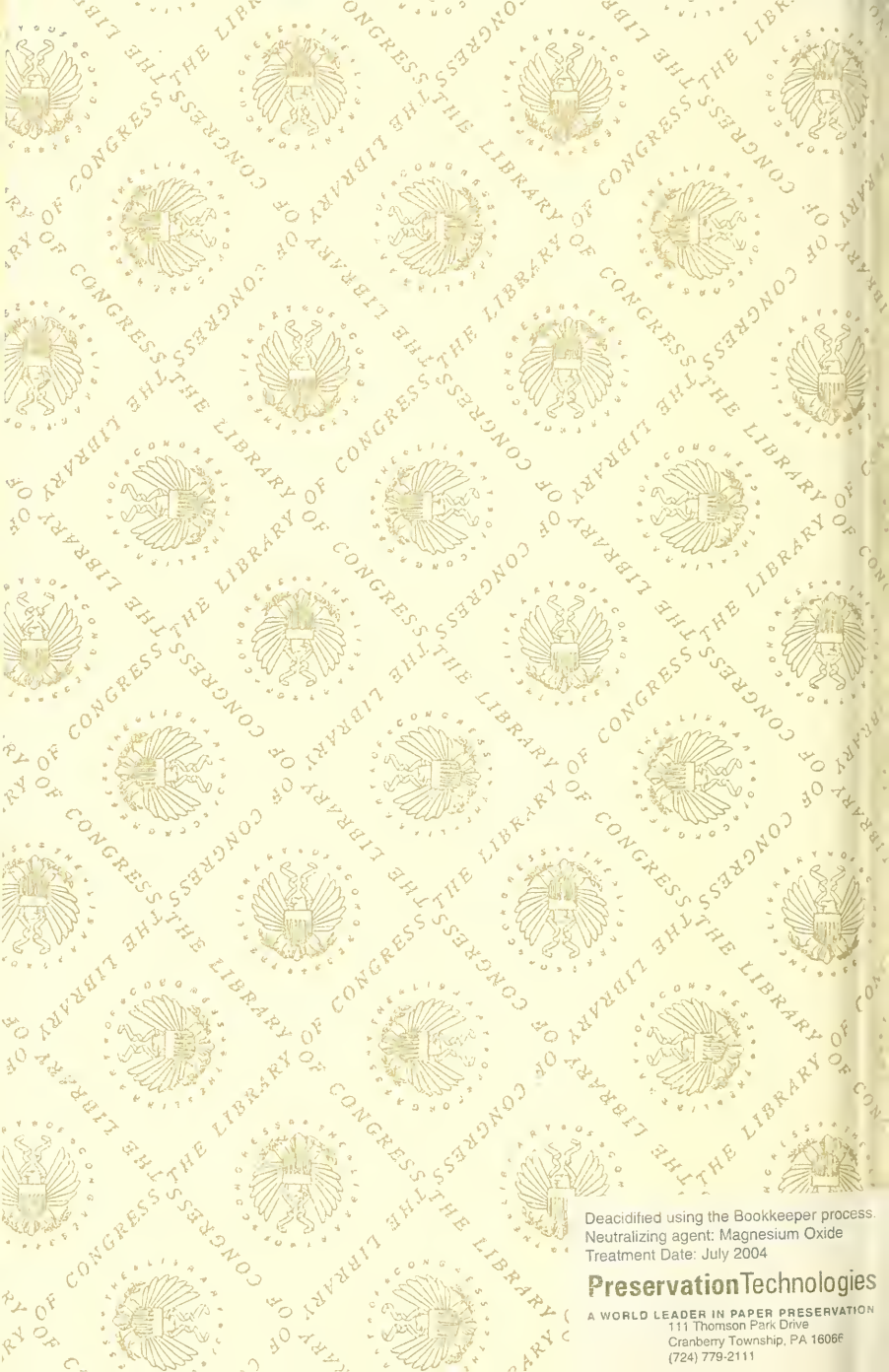
- Smith, John, 227, 250f.  
 Soul, the, Bergson's view, 88;  
     proper conception of it as a  
     unitary psychical agent,  
     121ff.  
 Speer, R. E., 306f., 350.  
 Spencer, H., 107, 141.  
 Spinoza, B., 15, 19ff., 26ff., 32f.  
 Stewart, J. McK., 70, 79,  
     84, 97, 100.  
 Subh-i-Azal, 282ff.  
 Sufism, 233, 279.  
 Sunnites, the, 275f.  
 Suso, H., 263.  
  
 Tauler, J., 238, 241, 259,  
     261, 263f.  
 Teresa, 246, 261, 267.  
 Theologia Germanica, 238,  
     242, 259.  
 Theosophy, 224.  
 Thomas à Kempis, 244.  
 Tyrrell, G., 219.  
  
 Underhill, E., 226.  
  
 Vatican Council, 198ff.  
 Vatralsky, S. K., 323.  
 Vedanta philosophy, 15, 22,  
     30.  
 Vivekananda, 17f., 30f.  
  
 Wace, H., 159f.  
 Ward, W., 189ff.  
 Ward, W. G., 189.  
 Weigel, V., 228.  
 Wesley, J., 161, 254f.  
 Wessel, J., 238.  
 Whichcote, B., 250.  
 Wilbois, J., 69.  
 Wilm, E. C., 98.  
 Wilson, S. G., 286, 289f.,  
     308f., 311, 315, 340.  
 Wordsworth, W., 229.  
  
 Zwingli, U., 176, 178.

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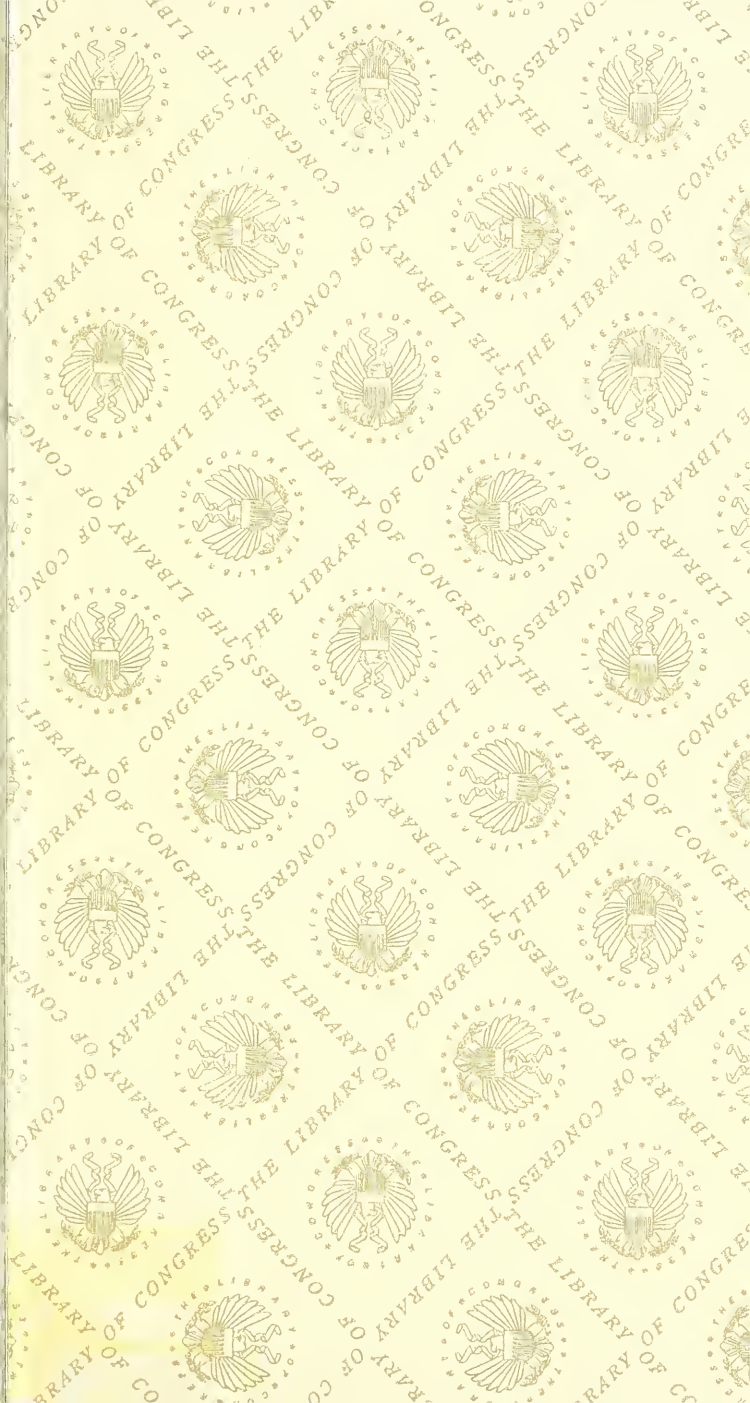




Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: July 2004

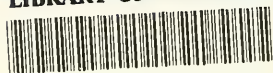
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